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JANUARY 14, 2008

# The American Conservative

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FOREVER WAR**

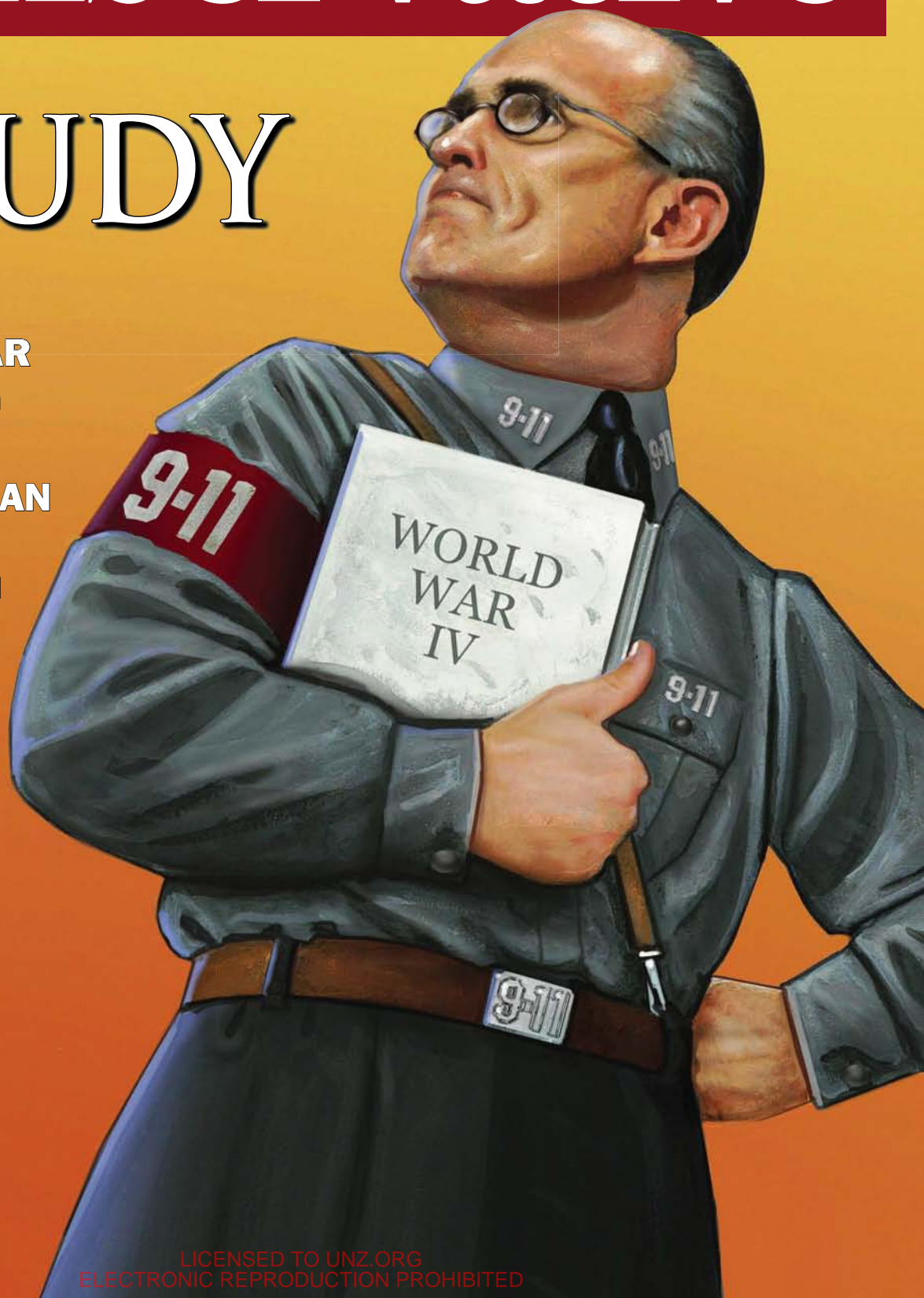
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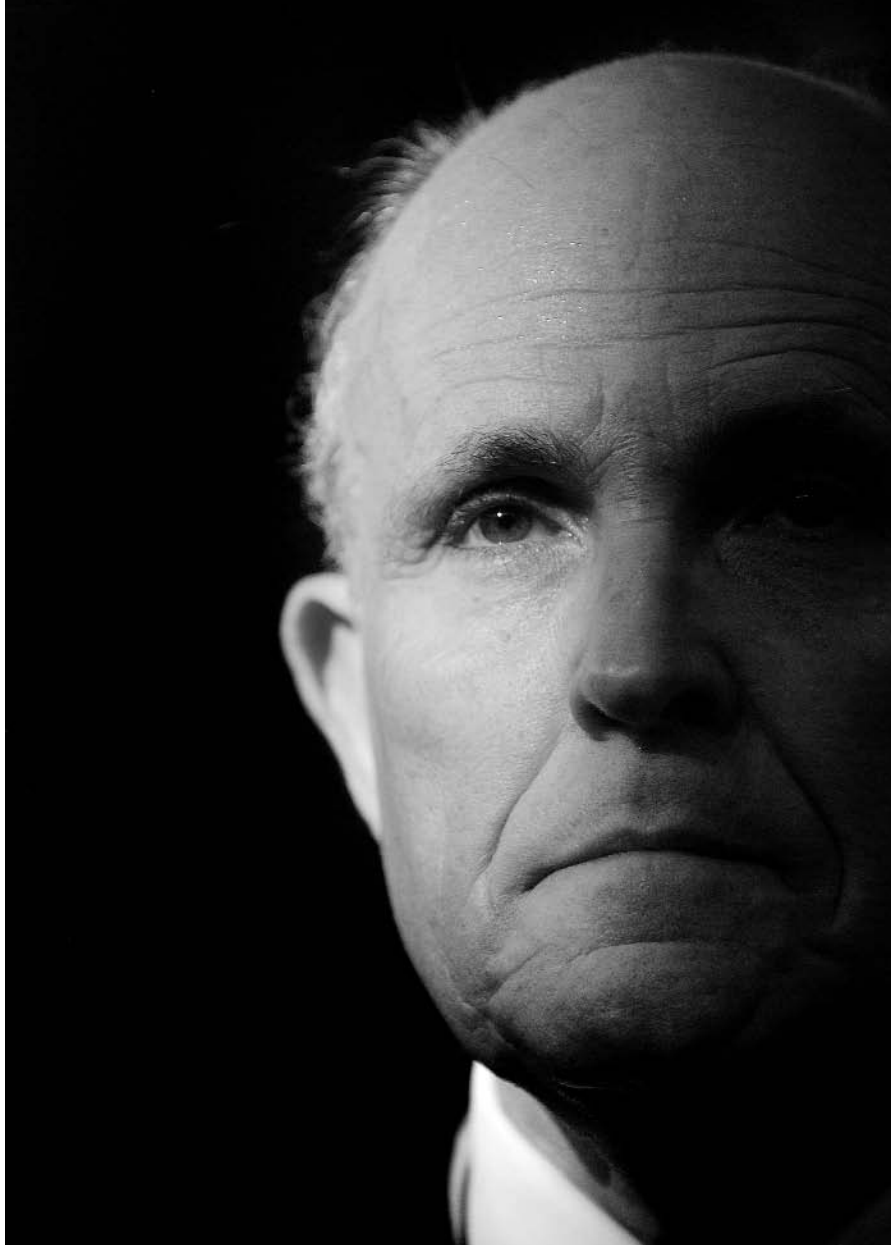
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## Declaring Forever War

BY MICHAEL C. DESCH Giuliani chose the most hawkish team of foreign-policy advisors possible. His election would ensure neoconservative hegemony for years to come. **Page 6**

## GOP Loses Its Life

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## [CONSERVATISM]

### GO RON GO!

The Ron Paul campaign has offered many surprises: a trove of YouTube videos, baffling songs with lyrics attempting to rhyme “Rothbardian,” even a blimp dumping tea into Boston Harbor. Some of the antics are amateurish, but many are brilliant—the record-shattering fundraising comes to mind.

Most importantly, the Paul campaign offers simple and bold answers. Asked in a debate what is the most important moral issue facing our nation, the candidate answered, “preventive war.” Questioned about his strategy for Iraq, Paul replied “Just come home. . . . This war is not going well because our foreign policy is defective.”

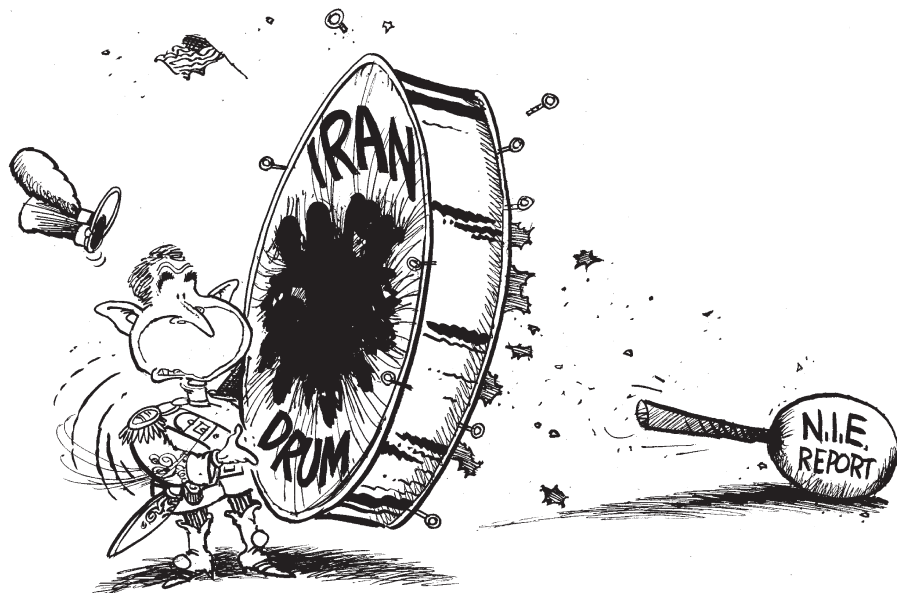
On domestic policy, the campaign champions the limited-government philosophy that inspired the conservative movement in its infancy. Now that movement’s leaders call Paul a “radical” and a “kook.” The founders of conservative institutions met similar abuse five decades ago. By deploying the same against the strictest Constitutionalist in the race, the mandarins of the Beltway Right have revealed themselves as usurpers. For this moment of clarity, we can thank Ron Paul.

But his appeal is not condemnation only. This quixotic, improbable, and improbably fun movement proves that political debate will not be closed forever and that old ideals can be revived. The campaign proves its own slogan: “Hope for America” indeed.

## [ELECTION]

### AWH, HUCKS

Mike Huckabee’s stunning rise from obscurity to the top tier of the Republican primary field is the other surprising development of this electoral season. The graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and bass guitarist for a band called Capitol Offense has relied on his



charming personality and pluck. Huckabee hasn’t been able to write himself \$10-million checks or even hire a large staff; he cut a recent interview short in order to iron his own suit.

But with an increased profile comes increased scrutiny about his positions. When asked which people influence his thinking on foreign policy, he cited the wildly diverse group of Thomas Friedman, Frank Gaffney, and Richard Haas. It turns out that Huckabee came to his signature issue, the Fair Tax, by reading the book that touts it. On immigration, he had been known to chastise restrictionists for their uncharitable attitudes toward illegal aliens, but when pressed to provide a plan for reform, he seems to have copied and pasted the text of a proposal by Mark Krikorian—one of TAC’s favorite immigration-policy thinkers.

While we’re pleased to see a challenge to Bush-era orthodoxies, Huckabee’s malleability can be disconcerting, too. *The New Republic*’s Johathan Chait joked, “Lord help us if he gets his hands on a copy of *Das Kapital*.”

## [TRENDS]

### HARRIET WITHOUT OZZIE

For the past decade, several negative social trends that had worsened since the 1960s (crime, out-of-wedlock births)

had peaked and seemed poised to reverse. The pervasive sense of inexorable social decay—the backdrop to Sen. Daniel Moynihan’s seminal 1993 essay, “Defining Deviancy Down”—was beginning to lift.

But while violent-crime levels may still be improving, those looking carefully at social indicators see troubling signs that the decade of stabilization may have reached its endpoint.

Note the latest figures published by the National Center for Birth Statistics, analyzing U.S. natality in 2006. The percentage of births to unmarried women is up for all races and is increasing at an accelerating rate. America’s overall illegitimacy rate is now 38.5 percent, up nearly 3 percent in the past two years. The unwed birth rate among Hispanics is growing at the fastest pace of all. It now stands at 50 percent—up from 19 percent in 1980—wiping out the hope once voiced by many that Hispanics would bring America a new wave of family traditionalism. Indeed, while President Bush famously said, “Family values don’t stop at the Rio Grande,” it seems that among recent Hispanic immigrants, marriage certainly does.

Illegitimate births correlate positively with almost every bad social outcome,

from dropping out of school to involvement in crime. Yes, we know the American family is changing, that we don't live in Ozzie and Harriet's time anymore. But if that change means an ever greater number of America's children being brought up without fathers, we will have plenty of time to regret the consequences.

[WORLD]

## DEMOCRATIZATION WITHOUT WAR

Hugo Chávez had been on a roll: in the past few years, the Venezuelan president—some would say dictator—has nationalized oil production, won re-election in a landslide, and played the part of the great socialist hope for the Sean Penn set. But on Dec. 2, *El Comandante* was brought down to size: the Venezuelan people rejected in referendum his proposal to rewrite the constitution to allow him to become president for life.

This was certainly a victory for Venezuela. "Twenty-first century socialism" is looking just as miserable as the 20th-century varieties, and any sign that the strongman in Caracas is being held accountable is positive. It was also a victory for America, but not in a "we win, they lose" kind of way.

Chávez has never been a serious threat to the United States, but he was often treated as a runner-up for "Axis of Evil" status by neocons who couldn't countenance a foreign leader who'd dare oppose America's war on terror and economic leadership. It was little surprise that in 2002 Washington silently cheered on (and perhaps clandestinely financed) a botched coup against Chávez's democratically elected government.

Chávez's defeat was a victory for the U.S. because it appears that a genuine opposition is forming in Venezuela and average voters—many of them poor—

showed impressive judgment in limiting the power of a would-be tyrant. And they did it all without the U.S. liberating them, nation-building, or otherwise interfering in their country.

[MEDIA]

## OPRAH HUGS HAWKS

Millions are apparently pleased that Oprah has deigned to descend from the mountaintop of daytime television to help Americans choose their next president. They might pause if they saw the segment of her show excerpted on "Buying the War," Bill Moyers's excoriating documentary on the performance of the American media during the months prior to the invasion of Iraq. The program, first broadcast last spring on PBS, spares almost no one in a position of power in the American media. But because Oprah has gone into the business of candidate selection and is likely the most influential media figure in America, her views merit a special look.

Moyers records an October 2002 Oprah show with guests Judith Miller and Kenneth Pollack speaking with certainty about Saddam's WMD programs. An Ahmad Chalabi flack also talks about how much the Iraqis hoped for an American "liberation." When an audience member meekly questioned the trio, Oprah cut her off with a dismissive "We're showing you what is."

It's a short segment, and the picture of Oprah silencing a woman raising legitimate questions is a drop in very large lake. But it's a helpful corrective to those viewing Oprah as some fount of political wisdom. ■

In keeping with our usual publication schedule, *TAC's* editorial offices will be closed for the next two weeks in celebration of Christmas. We will return to print on Jan. 17.

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[brains we don't trust]

# Declaring Forever War

Giuliani has surrounded himself with advisors who think the Bush Doctrine didn't go nearly far enough.

By Michael C. Desch

LIKE MOST AMERICANS, I knew little about Rudolph Giuliani, save that he had been the very successful mayor of New York City catapulted to iconic status for his cool-headed demeanor after the Sept. 11 attacks. I was curious about where he stood as a presidential candidate, so in April 2007, I joined nearly 3,000 other Texas A&M faculty and students to hear him speak.

After saying some nice things about his host, President George H.W. Bush, Rudy launched into a stemwinder about the "war on Islamic fundamentalist terrorism" that basically repudiated everything the former president stood for in his foreign policy. Moreover, in the space of 40 minutes, Giuliani never once mentioned Osama bin Laden, the man who masterminded the attack on his city.

I was so appalled by the mayor's simplistic message that terrorists were attacking us because they "oppose our freedom and ... want to impose their ideology on us" that I ignored protocol and challenged him during the Q&A. To the accompaniment of hisses from the rabidly pro-Rudy students, I reminded the mayor that Islamic fundamentalists in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and elsewhere in the Middle East have taken our side against al-Qaeda at various times. Like the students, Hizzonor was not amused, and I got five minutes of unvarnished Rudy chiding me for just not getting it.

To the cheers of the partisan crowd, Giuliani argued that my "failure to see

the connection between Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups [was] a recipe for disaster." In his view, the campaign of radical Islamic terrorism began back in the 1960s and 1970s and included things like the Black September attack upon Israeli Olympic athletes at Munich in 1972. He ridiculed my call to disaggregate the terrorist threat, saying it ignored the fact that Yasir Arafat, whom, he lamented, we helped win the Nobel Prize, was responsible for "slaughtering 29 Americans" over the years. I learned later that Giuliani was so annoyed by my hectoring that he complained about it at the reception after the talk. He was reportedly shocked to learn that I was not some lefty professor but a member of the faculty at the Bush School.

After this disheartening experience, I decided to look more closely at what Giuliani was saying about foreign policy and who was advising him. What I found alarmed me: Rudy's performance here was no aberration. Those who thought George W. Bush was too timid in the conduct of his foreign policy will find a champion in Rudy.

The Giuliani campaign was slow to articulate a detailed foreign policy. Through the summer of 2007, it was content to offer platitudes among the mayor's "Twelve Commitments" such as, "I will keep America on the offense in the Terrorists' War on Us." But by the fall, the candidate published a major piece in *Foreign Affairs* that outlined

his agenda. Explicitly rejecting realism, he instead sounded the tocsin: "Civilization itself, and the international system, had come under attack by a ruthless and radical Islamist enemy." Giuliani warned, "the terrorists' war on us was encouraged by unrealistic and inconsistent actions taken in response to terrorist attacks in the past. A realistic peace can only be achieved through strength."

Had I been more attentive over the years, I might have been less surprised by the mayor's hard-line neoconservative stance. I had forgotten that while U.S. attorney in New York, Giuliani tried to close the PLO's New York office. As mayor, he made headlines in 1995, when he had Arafat ejected from a concert at Lincoln Center. In a speech to the Republican Jewish Coalition this fall, Rudy pointed to this incident as emblematic of his leadership style: "I didn't hesitate, like Hillary Clinton hesitates to answer questions on what she's going to do about Iran. I didn't seek to negotiate with him, like Barack Obama would do or says he'd do with these people. I didn't call for a team of lawyers to help me. ... I just made a decision. See, I lead. That's what [being a] leader is about."

To the extent that a mayor of New York has a foreign policy, it needs to be loudly supportive of Israel. In a speech at the 2004 Republican National Convention, Giuliani struck the "Israel's war is our war" note by claiming that the war on terror began in Munich in 1972. His



September 2007 proposal to expand NATO to include Israel is part and parcel of this approach. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported that Giuliani is “the clear favorite of the party’s top Jewish activists.”

Giuliani holds up his résumé as mayor to buttress his claim that he is ready to be president. “I know from personal experience,” he wrote in *Foreign Affairs*, “that when security is reliably established in a troubled part of a city, normal life rapidly reestablishes itself: shops open, people move back in, children start playing ball on the sidewalks again, and soon a decent and law-abiding community returns to life. The same is true in world affairs.” Alas, his New York record is not so reassuring. Recall such pre-9/11 missteps as his decision to locate the city’s counterterrorism center in the World Trade Center, which had already been the target of an al-Qaeda terrorist attack in 1993; his failure to integrate the fire and police communications systems; his penchant for surrounding himself with sketchy characters like Police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, whom Giuliani would later recommend to train Iraqi security forces and as secretary of the department of homeland security. He dropped out of the blue-ribbon Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group because it cut into his paid speechmaking. Giuliani apparently thinks his years in Gracie Mansion sufficed to school him in high politics.

In one sense, his campaign is a big tent: it has by some estimates between 60 and 70 advisors. Some—British Soviet expert Robert Conquest and Reagan campaign defense advisor William Van Cleave—are clearly window-dressing. The core of senior advisors includes former *Commentary* editor Norman Podhoretz, Martin Kramer (Middle East), Stephen Rosen (defense), S. Enders Wimbush (diplomacy), Peter Berkowitz (statecraft,

human rights, and freedom), Kim Holmes (foreign policy), and perhaps Daniel Pipes. Giuliani’s chief foreign-policy advisor is retired diplomat and Yale instructor Charles Hill. In the face of controversy about how many neoconservatives were playing prominent roles, Podhoretz bragged to the *New York Observer*, “Giuliani doesn’t think that this is a liability.”

Podhoretz is the person whose presence has done the most to set in concrete the notion that Team Rudy is all neocon all the time. Famous for arguing that we are in the midst of “World War IV,” Podhoretz is scathing in his criticism of those he suspects of not waging the war with enough vigor. He even charges that many senior military officers show insufficient stomach for the fight, singling out former CENTCOM commander John Abizaid and his successor, Adm. William Fallon. Podhoretz is also an assiduous peddler of the new neocon myth that the antiwar camp stabbed President Bush in the back.

And he doesn’t stop at Iraq: Podhoretz constantly beats the drum for bombing Iran to halt its nascent nuclear program. Air Marshal Podhoretz assured *The Telegraph* that the air campaign “would take five minutes.” His optimism that attacking Iran would be another cakewalk combines with pessimism about the prospects of multilateral sanctions preventing Iran from getting the bomb. “Yet for all their retrospective remorse over the wholesale slaughter of the Jews back then,” Podhoretz sneers, “the Europeans seem no readier to lift a finger to prevent a second Holocaust than they were the first time around.”

There are areas where Podhoretz is out of synch with the rest of the Giuliani team. One is his steadfast commitment to the Bush administration’s efforts to spread democracy in the Middle East, which he applies equally to American enemies like Iran and Syria and friends

like Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Other Giuliani advisors are more restrained about democracy promotion. Another point of departure is Podhoretz’s long-standing critique of the Clinton administration for treating terrorism as simply a “crime problem,” a charge somewhat discordant with the mayor’s claim that his successful campaign against crime in New York City justifies electing him global sheriff.

The biggest problem Podhoretz poses for the Giuliani campaign is that he has some particularly far-fetched beliefs that even in these fevered times most Americans do not share. As Ian Buruma noted in a recent review of *World War IV*, Podhoretz “expresses a weird longing for the state of war, for the clarity it brings, and for the chance to divide one’s fellow citizens, or indeed the whole world, neatly into friends and foes, comrades and traitors, warriors and appeasers, those who are with us and those who are against.”

Another neocon stalwart in Rudy’s camp is Martin Kramer, a long-time think-tanker in Israel and the United States, who specializes in exposing the “biases” in academic studies of the Middle East. These wrong-headed ideas need to be challenged, in Kramer’s view, because they undermine U.S. policy. Among them, the faulty notion of “Arabists” in academia and government that the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict is somehow related to America’s problems in the Middle East. In Kramer’s view, the U.S. should stand firmly with Israel because only then will the Arabs respect us. In 2001, he told the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) that the United States’ key problem in the region is “its perceived lack of resolve; its quickness to forgive, or at least forget; its penchant for creating categorical boxes, like the state sponsors of terrorism list, and then ignoring them altogether. This is perceived as weakness, and when you

are perceived as weak in the Middle East, you become a tempting target and the vultures begin to circle.” Kramer’s lack of confidence that America will show the necessary mettle persuades him that Podhoretz is too sanguine about our chances in World War IV.

Kramer is representative of the Giuliani team’s more cautious view of nation building. Challenging the Bush administration’s faith in democracy as a panacea for our problems in the Middle East, he reminded a WINEP audience in 2002, “from the vantage point of Israel, things look precisely the opposite. Israel has five immediate neighbors: Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Authority. Syria, Jordan, and Egypt are ruled without even a pretense of democracy. ... And witness: Islamist movements are no great threat to order in any of these three autocratic states.” Conversely, he observed, Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority both have some measure of “pluralism” and are rife with Islamicism. Like most other members of the Giuliani varsity foreign-policy team, Kramer takes a more Jeane Kirkpatrick-type line on democracy promotion than neocons in the Bush administration did.

Giuliani’s senior defense advisor is my old colleague from Harvard’s Olin Institute of Strategic Studies, Stephen Peter Rosen. He qualifies as a movement neocon, having signed many of the Project for a New American Century’s ukases, such as the Sept. 21, 2001 letter arguing, “even if the evidence does not link Iraq directly to the attack, any strategy aiming at the eradication of terrorism and its sponsors must include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq” and the April 3, 2002 letter baldly declaring, “Israel’s fight against terrorism is our fight.” Not surprisingly, given his experience on the National Security Council during the early years of the Reagan military build-up, Rosen supports increased

defense spending and the expansion of our ground forces. He is also an unabashed advocate of American primacy, arguing in a recent piece in *The National Interest*, “successful imperial governance must focus on maintaining and increasing, if possible, the initial advantage in the ability to generate military power.”

But Rosen’s view of international politics goes beyond renascent Reagan-era hawkishness and embraces a social Darwinistic framework for understanding hegemonic America’s challenges. Rejecting Bush’s pre-9/11 argument that America needed a “humble foreign policy,” Rosen wrote:

Humility is always a virtue, but the dominant male atop any social hierarchy, human or otherwise, never managed to rule simply by being nice. Human evolutionary history has produced a species that both creates hierarchies and harbors the desire among subordinates to challenge its dominant member. Those challenges never disappear. The dominant member can never do everything that subordinates desire, and so it is blamed for what it does not do as much as for what it does.

Giuliani’s senior team has another Harvard connection through Peter Berkowitz, a former political theory professor in the Government Department who now holds a joint appointment at George Mason Law School and Stanford’s Hoover Institution. Berkowitz is extremely critical of academia, issuing jeremiads like the one that appeared in April 2005 in the *Washington Post* charging that many Middle East studies programs are in thrall to the “poisonous political proposition that Israel is the root source of all the ills that beset the Muslim world.” In a summer 2007 piece in *Policy Review*, he dismissed academia

as “unaccountable to outside authority, largely sheltered from opposing points of view, given to seeing themselves as a saving remnant both unappreciated by the broader public and besieged by an evil government, professors at our leading universities have created an intellectual environment that has undermined the conditions that foster free and unbiased exploration of the great issues of the day.” To be sure, academia has its biases, but these are counterbalanced by other intellectual forces in society. If Berkowitz and other neoconservatives had their way, they would impose their own orthodoxy on campus, thereby removing a check on themselves.

S. Enders Wimbush, a former Radio Liberty director and currently a Hudson Institute senior fellow, apparently aspires to be President Giuliani’s Karen Hughes. One of his major strategic planks is to establish a “Radio Free Iran” to undermine the mullocracy. He epitomizes the ambivalence about Iran among the Giuliani crowd: on the one hand, they envision a major role for the captive Iranian masses yearning for freedom; on the other, they treat Iran as a monolith. In January 2007, for example, Wimbush despaired that Iran is undeterrable because the regime is willing to “martyr” the entire Iranian nation, and it has even expressed the desirability of doing so in a way to accelerate the inevitable, apocalyptic collision between Islam and the West that will result in Islam’s final worldwide triumph.” Like Berkowitz, Wimbush complains that American universities are not doing their part by producing graduates with the skills necessary to wage the global war on terror, so he is an advocate of the philanthropic community using its resources to prompt reform.

Kim Holmes, a defense analyst for the Heritage Foundation, recently served as assistant secretary of state for



international organization in the second Bush administration. Like most of the rest of the team, he is cautious about depending too much on democracy promotion, arguing in an August 2006 lecture: "We must distinguish between elections and democracy, and between populism and freedom. Frankly, there may be times when supporting overseas elections may not be advisable. And not every populist movement desires liberty. Even despots and terrorists can get elected in some circumstances. We have only to look at Belarus or the Palestinian

*New York Sun* in December 2006: "Self-hating Westerners have an out-sized importance due to their prominent role as shapers of opinion in universities, the media, religious institutions, and the arts. They serve as the Islamists' auxiliary *mujahideen*." Pipes's appointment to the board of the U.S. Institute of Peace by President Bush sparked controversy because, among other things, he urged Congress to pass legislation to establish a board to monitor federally funded area studies programs in universities for anti-American sentiments.

#### **DANIEL PIPES IS THE CRAZY UNCLE OF THE GIULIANI CAMPAIGN. EVEN AMONG THIS GROUP, HE STANDS OUT AS AN EXTREMIST.**

elections." Holmes still maintains that we went to war in Iraq exclusively to prevent Saddam from developing weapons of mass destruction and to disrupt his links with al-Qaeda. He blames most of our troubles today in Iraq on Iran, arguing that the Islamic Republic is "acting as if it's on a roll." Holmes is also critical of European politicians he thinks are insufficiently supportive of the United States. The strangest example was his March 2007 broadside against the British Conservative Party, which he suggested was going wobbly.

Daniel Pipes is the crazy uncle of the Giuliani campaign. In some places he is listed as a senior advisor, but the chair of the senior advisory team went to great lengths to minimize his influence. This is not surprising because even among this group, Pipes stands out as an extremist. His day job is as director of The Middle East Forum, a think tank that focuses on U.S. interests in the Middle East and includes Campus Watch, a group that monitors Middle Eastern studies on campus for evidence of anti-Israel bias. He gave this over-the-top assessment of the situation to the

That alarmism also colors his view of Israel's security situation: in an October 2007 article in the *Jerusalem Post*, Pipes portrayed the Jewish state as besieged from all sides: "Count the ways Israel is under siege: from Iranians building a nuclear bomb, Syrians stockpiling chemical weapons, Egyptians and Saudis developing serious conventional forces, Hezbollah attacking from Lebanon, Fatah from the West Bank, Hamas from Gaza, and Israel's Muslim citizens becoming politically restive and more violent." No one denies that Israel faces a challenging security environment, but few serious analysts would endorse this apocalyptic view. In the *New York Sun*, he dismissed the bipartisan Iraq Study Group's conclusion that many of our problems in Iraq are linked to the unresolved Israel-Palestine conflict as the product of "small minds."

Pipes's uncompromisingly pro-Israel line has at times gotten him into trouble. For example, he was a major supporter of *From Time Immemorial* author Joan Peters's discredited thesis that the Arabs had no claim to Palestine because most of them did not arrive there until shortly

before 1948. Pipes, like neoconservative hawk Laurie Mylroie, has also flip-flopped wildly on how to treat Saddam Hussein. Both advocated closer ties with Saddam when he was fighting Iran in the 1980s. After that war ended, both suddenly discovered his horrendous human-rights record and support of Palestinian terrorism. But nothing better demonstrates how far out of the post-Annapolis mainstream Pipes is than his association with extremist groups, such as Jerusalem Summit, which oppose the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories and advocates that Palestinians settle in other Arab countries.

Finally, Giuliani enlisted former Foreign Service officer Charles Hill to chair his senior advisory team. Many reports imply that Hill, a previously rather obscure figure, was chosen to counter the widespread perception that Giuliani's team was a wholly owned neo-conservative subsidiary. In an October 2007 interview in the *New York Sun*, Hill expressed dismay about a recent *New York Times* piece because "the subtext seems to be war crazy neocons have captured the campaign and that is a distortion." Hill countered, "this is a non-ideological approach that we take. ... It is a center right group of people with a wide range of thoughts and ideas."

Hill describes himself as an "Edmund Burke conservative," but as one former Yale International Security Studies Fellow explained to me, "There's not much if any daylight between Charlie and the neocons, except on the degree to which is Charlie is more of a multilateralist than them. ... I suppose the only difference is that Charlie is more like Cheney, who dovetails with the neocons on most issues of the last 6.5 years, rather than strictly being a neocon. And like Cheney, I think 9/11 had a massive effect on Charlie. You can't underestimate just how much it galvanized him."

A brief review of Hill's career reveals how he has moved steadily closer to the neocon camp. As his former Yale student Molly Worthen recounts in her treacly biography, *The Man On Whom Nothing Was Lost*, Hill began his Foreign Service career in Switzerland. While he was watching the young Red Guards in the vanguard of the Cultural Revolution from across the bamboo curtain in Hong Kong, Hill realized the double-edged nature of youth: he appreciated their dynamism, but feared their disregard for established order. This lesson was reinforced during a sabbatical he took at Harvard in 1970, where he experienced American youth rebellion firsthand. Worthen reports that Hill flirted with the antiwar movement, writing articles in the campus newspaper and even contributing a chapter to a book edited by Noam Chomsky. But after his next assignment in Vietnam, which he initially resisted, Hill came to believe that the antiwar movement had undercut the American effort just as it was beginning to succeed.

Hill's assignment to the Israel desk at Foggy Bottom and then to the embassy in Tel Aviv edged him closer to the neo-conservative camp. According to Worthen, Hill "was very informed by his experience in Israel and has deep, deep sympathy for the Israelis, not based on their political situation, but a very existential empathy for their national philosophy and their culture, which he perceives as honest and manly, really standing for something that is good and true about the human race." Hill found the Israelis he met to be "intrepid," in contrast to the effete Americans he encountered in Cambridge. During his posting in Israel, Hill was introduced to Menachem Begin and was so taken that he asked the Likud prime minister for an autographed picture. Later, when he was Secretary of State George Schultz's executive assistant, Hill

would develop a close relationship with Israel's United Nations representative Benjamin Netanyahu.

Hill's government service ended abruptly with Schultz's departure during the transition to the first Bush administration. While Bush and Reagan's personal relations were cordial, a fact historian Douglas Brinkley tells me is amply evident in Reagan's soon to be published diaries, there was little love lost among lower-level officials in the two administrations. Hill went with Schultz to the Hoover Institution for a year, but was forced to resign from the Foreign Service after it became clear that he had concealed evidence of Schultz's extensive knowledge of the Iran-Contra scandal from federal agents. Hill moved to New Haven and commuted for a time to New York while he worked for UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali. With Boutros Ghali's retirement, Hill began to teach in 1997 in Yale's Freshman Directed Studies in the Humanities program.

It was there that he met historians Paul Kennedy and John Lewis Gaddis and came to play a role in the development of Yale's Studies in Grand Strategy program. From the beginning, the program was a lightning rod for controversy. Some Yalies objected to its elitism—the former ISS fellow says the program "very much views itself as elite and cultivates that reputation"—others to its right-of-center political orientation (probably unfair to Kennedy, though he has of late started signing Project for a New American Century manifestos), still others to its pretentiousness. On this last count, Worthen admits, "sometimes it can seem like students in the grand strategy course are laboring under the delusion that they will be appointed secretary of state or find themselves nominated to the Supreme Court just a few months after they graduate." Another former fellow

described how Kennedy and Gaddis convened an "emergency dinner" of the grand-strategy faculty and ISS fellows after 9/11 and had the transcript of the evening's discussions sealed in Yale's archives for posterity. Worthen's biography of Hill itself grew out of a paper she wrote for Gaddis, which is the sort of self-referential assignment that one would only get in a program that thought so well of itself.

But the most frequent criticism of the program involves Hill's pedagogical approach. Worthen observes, "Hill's teaching style dazzles and offends in the same way that religious indoctrination does." His demeanor in the classroom, along with its extracurricular manifestations, turned Worthen from an acolyte who scrawled "Charles Hill is God" in her freshman notebook into a skeptical biographer, who confessed that "each time I packed up my notebook and left his office, I could not help feeling a bit brainwashed." Worthen fretted, "something about Professor Hill made us wildly anxious to prove ourselves, evidently to the point of self ruin." She recounts how Hill encouraged one undergraduate to enlist in the Marines and another to forego a lucrative corporate job for a U.S. government post in Kuwait, much to her parents' chagrin.

What do we know of Hill's own foreign-policy agenda? In an interview broadcast over a conservative website called Captain's Quarters in July 2007, Hill focused on three issues. First, he argued that the American Diplomatic Corps was badly in need of reform because of a "lack of professional dedication came into the Foreign Service." He explained that this problem was "related to the 1968 generation of young people coming into the Service and essentially not wanting to put loyalty to the President or American foreign policy first. They were putting their own employee rights first, as if they were

unionized workers.” Hill promised that Rudy will “get rid of the people not on the team” and suggested the mayor will do for the Foreign Service what he did to the New York Police Department.

Second, Hill argued that a Giuliani administration would give high priority to combating anti-Americanism. This is urgent, in his view, because many of our problems in the Middle East are the result of the “propaganda pumped out by Arab regimes” rather than any specific U.S. policies.

Finally, Hill offered what he considered a more nuanced and effective policy for promoting human rights and democracy than the Bush administration’s. Under Giuliani, the emphasis would be on supporting dissidents “bravely resisting tyranny” rather than on reforming friendly governments. Hill further promised to focus on the more limited goal of spreading “decent government.” He explained to *The American Spectator* that the United States “has to stand for democracy. We can’t turn away from that, but we have to do it in a way that’s realistic and Rudy Giuliani has talked about the realistic piece.”

Otherwise, Hill is squarely in the neo-conservative camp. He maintains, “If we pull out of Iraq now, it’s just going to break the dam and there will be flood waters of chaos and murder across the region.” He evidently buys into Podhoretz’s World War IV mindset, writing in *The Yale Israel Journal*, “if the Islamists can defeat the Middle Eastern states that seek reform and work with the international system, we will be faced with another world war.” It’s as if Hill believes radical Islamic terrorists constitute a greater danger to the United States than the Soviet Union did.

In *State of Denial*—the third installment of his *Bush at War* trilogy—Bob Woodward recounted a conversation between then-Texas governor George W.

Bush and Saudi Prince Bandar bin-Sultan before the 2000 election in which the candidate confessed, “I don’t have the foggiest idea about what I think about foreign policy.” To fill that empty vessel, the Bush campaign assembled a diverse group of advisors—“the Vulcans”—who represented a broad range of opinion within the Republican Party, from neoconservatives (Paul Wolfowitz) to traditional hawks (Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld) to realists (Colin Powell, Richard Armitage, and Condoleezza Rice). That Bush eventually threw his lot in with the neoconservatives is a function of the dramatic events of 9/11 combined with the weaknesses of his other advisors. But at least this was not a foregone conclusion.

**PODHORETZ TOLD THE NEW YORK OBSERVER THAT “AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, THERE IS VERY LITTLE DIFFERENCE IN HOW HE SEES THE WAR AND HOW I SEE IT.”**

Rudolph Giuliani, in contrast, is no empty vessel. He knows exactly where he stands. His spokesman told the *New York Observer*: “Mayor Giuliani has a range of advisors to provide him information on foreign policy issues and at the end of the day Mayor Giuliani’s viewpoints regarding foreign policy are his own.” Hill confirmed to Captain’s Quarters that Giuliani has a “really fully formed foreign policy approach, a comprehensive vision. ... not something where he needs to turn to somebody and say ‘what do I do, or what do I think about this?’ He already has it in mind.”

Unfortunately, he is of one mind with some of the most unrepentant, unreconstructed neoconservatives around. Podhoretz told the *New York Observer* that “as far as I can tell, there is very little difference in how he sees the war and how I see it.” If anyone thinks that neoconservatism is on the outs after the debacle in Iraq, they need look no

further than the Republican frontrunner’s brain-trust.

To be sure, neoconservatives do not all think alike on every issue, as evidenced by the Giuliani team’s skepticism about social engineering. But the continuities far outnumber the divergences. Even allegedly non-neocon members of the team like Charles Hill turn out, upon closer inspection, to be solidly of the familiar persuasion.

Some hope that all of this is just posturing to secure the Republican nomination, which will be delivered by a base troubled by Giuliani’s multiple marriages, occasional cross-dressing, and support for abortion, civil unions, and immigrants’ rights. A post on Matthew Yglesias’s *Atlantic Monthly* blog offered a theory:

“Giuliani is stocking up on these stock characters not for real advice—he’s not that insane—but rather to get out a sort of dogwhistle message to the true rightwing nuts, who are willing to forgive a guy anything if he will only pledge to nuke significant parts of the Middle East.” Yglesias himself is not so sure: he thinks Rudy is “bat-s--t insane.”

Giuliani’s tendency to conflate all terrorist groups—whether Islamist or not and whether they attack the United States or just allies like Israel—led Fred Kaplan of *Slate* to dub him the “anti-statesman.” Sending him and his team to the White House might actually ignite World War IV. ■

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[Roe v. Wade Republican]

# GOP Loses Its Life

A pro-abortion nominee would shatter Reagan's coalition.

By Tom Piatak

1980 WAS A WATERSHED YEAR for the Republican Party. The importance of social conservatives to the coalition Ronald Reagan was assembling was such that George H.W. Bush had to renounce his pro-choice past to become Reagan's running mate. Since that time, every presidential and vice-presidential nominee of the GOP has been pro-life. There is room for debate about what social conservatives have gotten from the GOP; many now complain that they are consigned to the back of the Republican bus. But there is no doubt what the support of social conservatives has brought the GOP: electoral victory after victory, including the re-election of George W. Bush in 2004. Without the support of social conservatives in Ohio for Bush, we would now be approaching the end of John Kerry's first term. In fact, in the 28 years since the elder Bush became pro-life to become Reagan's running mate, the GOP has controlled at least the White House, the House, or the Senate—and often several of these—in 26 of those years.

All of this may be about to change: polls indicate that Rudy Giuliani is the frontrunner to be the next Republican presidential nominee. If Giuliani becomes the party's standard-bearer and is then elected, the informal prohibition against pro-choice candidates within the GOP will be shattered, and the power of social conservatives within the party will inevitably decline. The bar for future candidates will be set not by the

Gipper, but by the former mayor of New York who proudly told CNN in 1999, "I'm pro-choice, I'm pro-gay rights."

Giuliani's self description was accurate. As mayor, he marched in gay-pride parades and proclaimed "Out in Government Day." In 1997, he signed a bill providing to city employees in "domestic partnerships" the same benefits enjoyed by married employees. Giuliani described the legislation as a "significant step forward in the human rights continuum."

With respect to abortion, Giuliani opposed all efforts to provide legal protection to the unborn. He spoke out in opposition to requiring minors to obtain parental consent for abortions and favored taxpayer funding. When asked on "Meet the Press" in 2000 if he supported Clinton's veto of a partial-birth abortion ban, he responded, "I would vote to preserve the option for women," positioning himself to the left of many Democrats. Giuliani told Phil Donahue in 1989, "if the ultimate choice of the woman—my daughter or any other woman—would be in this particular circumstance to have an abortion, I'd support that. I'd give my daughter the money for it." He went so far as to proclaim Jan. 22, 1998—the 25th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*—"Roe v. Wade Anniversary Day."

There is no reason to expect anything substantially different from a President Giuliani. Whatever grudging concessions Giuliani may make to social

conservatives to get elected will not result in a president willing to speak out in defense of traditional morality or in support of innocent human life. And the compromises Giuliani has offered so far are meager. His principal concession to social conservatives has been his pledge to "appoint strict constructionist judges." But waiting for judges to win the culture war has not been a successful strategy, which explains why some social conservatives have begun to wonder what they have earned by steadfastly supporting Republicans. After all, David Souter, Sandra Day O'Connor, and Anthony Kennedy were all presented as "strict constructionists" to the GOP electorate, and they are the reason the Supreme Court reaffirmed *Roe v. Wade* in 1992.

In the first GOP presidential debate this year, Giuliani explained that it would be "okay" if a "strict constructionist" justice voted to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, and "It would be also [okay] if a strict constructionist judge viewed it as precedent, and I think a judge has to make that decision." Such a laissez-faire attitude to the judiciary will not bring about the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. It is useful to recall that Harriet Miers would most likely have voted to reaffirm *Roe*, and the main reason Miers didn't make it onto the Supreme Court was that George W. Bush was so beholden to social conservatives that he could not ignore their outrage over his nominee. Giuliani would feel no such pressure.

Giuliani's supporters trumpet the talking point that the abortion rate in New York City declined while he was mayor. They ignore the facts that Giuliani did nothing to even discourage abortion and that the abortion rate actually underwent a steeper decline in the rest of New York state. Giuliani could as reasonably take credit for the regularity of the tides during his mayoralty. His campaign website also vows to maintain "the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman." One needn't take into account how Giuliani treated the "sanctity" of his own marriages to conclude this is meaningless. Giuliani has not demonstrated any serious commitment to the natural law, traditional morality, or religious principle, and it is easy to see how someone who viewed domestic-partner legislation as a "logical step forward" would someday view gay marriage in much the same way.

By demonstrating how unimportant social conservatives had become to the GOP, Giuliani's nomination could well transform American politics. Millions of Americans vote Republican in spite of the party's economic views, not because of them. There is no doubt a Giuliani candidacy would alienate many of these voters, pushing some to their ancestral Democratic home, some to a possible pro-life third party, and some to stay home on election day. Those who remain in the GOP would be part of a party that viewed the war on terror as the premier social issue, as Jonah Goldberg has argued it now is. Quite a descent from 1980.

As dispiriting as it is to contemplate a Giuliani presidency as a social conservative, it is even more depressing to consider it as a Catholic. The last Catholic nominated by the GOP for national office was Barry Goldwater's running mate, William Miller, a dutiful Catholic and public servant untouched by scandal, who returned to practice law in his hometown of Lockport, New York after

the 1964 election, successfully resisting the temptation to cash in on public service by starting a high-priced consulting firm employing dubious associates and serving questionable clients. The only Catholic to be elected president, John F. Kennedy, did have a personal life as scandalous as Giuliani's, but at least avoided public conflict with Church teaching and had enough wit, grace, and charisma to remain a popular figure

decades after his death. Giuliani lacks Miller's decency and Kennedy's charm. His election as president would be an embarrassment to American Catholics who agree with what the Church teaches and a disaster for all Americans who believe in traditional morality and the sanctity of innocent human life. ■

*Tom Piatak writes from Cleveland, Ohio.*

[freedom is slavery]

# Authoritarian Temptation

Can we trust the the presidency to a mayor like Giuliani?

By Glenn Greenwald

ONE OF THE MOST under-discussed aspects of Rudy Giuliani's quest for the presidency is how politically shrewd he is. Giuliani was elected mayor of one of the great bastions of American liberalism despite being a former Reagan DOJ official and Republican prosecutor renowned for his merciless, at times humiliating, treatment of criminal defendants. And after four years of living under his rule, New Yorkers re-elected Giuliani in a landslide victory against an icon of traditional Big Apple liberalism, Manhattan borough president Ruth Messinger.

Giuliani never disguised himself. While his moderate stances on social issues distinguished him from the Jerry Falwell wing of the 1993 Republican Party, he never pretended to be anything other than what he was. He was not a popular mayor because he softened his

prosecutorial zeal or concealed his fixation with imposing order or renounced his faith in centralized power vested in a single, strong, even unchallengeable leader.

Quite the contrary. But New Yorkers, including hordes of traditional Democrats and even Manhattan liberals, were grateful for Giuliani's rule and overwhelmingly re-elected him, precisely because he so aggressively wielded government power. At least for the first several years of his tenure, even the Left cheered as he defended and encouraged his police department's excesses, casually disregarded long-standing limits on mayoral power, crushed seemingly immovable bureaucracies, took control away from the most sacrosanct municipal fiefdoms, and forced the city's powerful unions and political factions into submission.

But the very characteristics that made Giuliani (for his first term) such a popular and effective mayor render him spectacularly unfit to be president. In many senses, the city that Giuliani inherited in 1993, languishing in chaos and craving order, is the antithesis of the United States of 2008, plagued by previously unthinkable abuses of executive power.

New York City in the mid-1990s presented an authoritarian mayor with the ultimate challenge: impose order on a city that was widely assumed to be ungovernable. But America in 2008 presents an authoritarian president with the ultimate fantasy: the ability to wield more power than any other human being in the world, with the fewest real limits in modern American history.

As constrained as a mayor's power typically is, Giuliani never ceased pushing those limits. In a 2001 retrospective on the mayor's tenure, the *New York Times* concluded, "the suppression of dissent or of anything that irked the mayor, became a familiar theme." Giuliani's idiosyncratic—one could say Orwellian—understanding of "freedom," expressed during a 1994 speech, reveals just how literally authoritarian his worldview is:

What we don't see is that freedom is not a concept in which people can do anything they want, be anything they can be. Freedom is about authority. Freedom is about the willingness of every single human being to cede to lawful authority a great deal of discretion about what you do.

By the nature of the office, even the most excessively secretive, grudge-harboring authoritarian in charge of a municipality can only do so much damage. But the dangers posed by allowing such an individual to rule the most powerful nation on earth are boundless. And those general risks are greatly enhanced after eight long years of unprecedented expansions of govern-

ment power and systematic erosions of virtually every check on executive authority.

A President Giuliani would inherit an office bestowed with such dark powers as indefinite detention, interrogation methods widely considered to be torture, vast warrantless surveillance authority, and an impenetrable wall of secrecy secured by multiple executive and judicial instruments. Set all of that next to a submissive and impotent Congress and an equally supine media—to say nothing of the prospect of another terrorist attack to exacerbate every one of those factors—and it is hard to imagine a more toxic combination than Rudy Giuliani and the Oval Office.

Our political landscape has now tilted so heavily in favor of unchecked presidential prerogatives that even a lame duck, wildly unpopular, and universally discredited George W. Bush is rarely denied what he wants. With this framework now bolted in place, a newly elected, shrewd, and inherently aggressive Giuliani, whose certainty about his own rightness is matched only by his contempt for those who disagree, could easily run roughshod over any attempts to constrain his actions.

The Sept. 11 transformation of Giuliani into the swaggering, beloved "America's Mayor" has erased from the collective memory just how severely his bullying ways had overstayed their welcome in New York. Giuliani was widely disliked by 1999, when his approval ratings dropped to a Bush-like 37 percent. At the root of New Yorkers' discontent with Giuliani was his complete intolerance for any limits on his own power and contempt for dissent from his decisions. Giuliani claimed the mantle of The Decider long before George W. Bush crowned himself.

The longer he stayed in office, the more drooling Giuliani's thirst for power seemed to become. Popular first-term

efforts to crack down on menacing squeegee men and turnstile-jumpers morphed into senseless, vindictive second-term crusades against hot dog vendors and jaywalkers.

In 1999, Giuliani sought amendments to the City Charter that would have eliminated term limits and allowed him to remain in power indefinitely, just as leftist authoritarian Hugo Chavez recently attempted to achieve with Venezuela's Constitution. Giuliani tried again shortly after the 9/11 attack, invoking the crisis to suggest that his term be extended.

Whenever he found a crusade that triggered his sense of righteousness, legal and even constitutional constraints were of little concern to the mayor. He ended up on the losing end of one court battle after the next, arising from his efforts to stifle private expression that he disliked, including endless campaigns against an art exhibit he deemed blasphemous, bus and subway advertisements he considered offensive, and political protests he found annoying. According to Rachel Morris's recent article in *The Washington Monthly*, Giuliani "lost thirty-five First Amendment cases in court."

New York is governed by a "strong mayor" system in which the City Council has very little power. But throughout his tenure, Giuliani viewed even isolated attempts by the council to "interfere in" his governance to be contemptible nuisances. He frequently waged war with city agencies whose task was to exercise oversight of the mayor's office, and he initiated numerous battles designed to amend long-standing City Charter provisions with the goal of increasing his own power. He demands absolute loyalty from underlings, and, in return, retains and rewards even the most inept and corrupt loyalists.

Perhaps most disturbing of all when considering his presidential ambitions, Giuliani seemed to take particular delight in intervening in and inflaming the city's



most intense controversies arising out of excessive assertions of state authority. Some of the most turbulent scandals he faced involved the racially charged, highly dubious use of violence by the NYPD. His paramount instinct was to defend the police reflexively, even before any relevant facts were known.

Almost uniformly, Giuliani's presidential campaign has been measured and highly disciplined, but he has had momentary lapses that expose the authoritarian impulses that New Yorkers know so well. In the midst of the September controversy over the MoveOn.org ad criticizing Gen. David Petraeus, Giuliani opined that the antiwar group "passed a line that we should not allow American political organizations to pass."

Exactly as one would expect, Giuliani has enthusiastically endorsed virtually every one of the most controversial Bush/Cheney assertions of presidential power. He wants to keep Guantanamo open and mocks concerns over the use of torture, even derisively comparing sleep deprivation to the strain of his own campaign. He not only defends Bush's warrantless surveillance, but does not recognize the legitimacy of any concerns relating to unchecked government power.

In April, Cato Institute's president, Ed Crane, asked several candidates if they believed the president should have the authority to arrest U.S. citizens, on U.S. soil, and detain them with no review of any kind. *National Review's* Ramesh Ponnuru reported Giuliani's response: "The mayor said that he would want to use this authority infrequently."

In aggressively rejecting that such a power could exist, Justice Antonin Scalia wrote, "The very core of liberty secured by our Anglo-Saxon system of separated powers has been freedom from indefinite imprisonment at the will of the Executive." Yet Giuliani's instinct was to assume that he would automatically possess that tyrannical power.

At a campaign event in New Hampshire a week later, Giuliani suggested that the president would even have what he called "inherent authority" to disregard a Congressional vote to defund the war in Iraq and could continue to prosecute it unilaterally. Not even the most radical of the Bush theorists of presidential omnipotence would endorse such an idea. In a February *New York Times* op-ed, former Bush DOJ attorney John Yoo acknowledged, "Congress has every power to end the war—if it really wanted to. It has the power of the purse."

Giuliani, when he was merely in charge of New York's garbage collec-

tion, zoning rules, and a municipal police force, developed a reputation as a power-hungry, dissent-intolerant authoritarian, obsessed with secrecy and expanding his own power. It takes little imagination to apprehend the grave dangers from vesting in such a person virtually unlimited power to control the world's most powerful military as well as a sprawling, federal bureaucracy. ■

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## No More Slam Dunks

A reality-based assessment of Iran's nuclear capability

By Philip Giraldi

THE BOMBSHELL National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nuclear program asserted with a "high degree of certainty" that Tehran had abandoned its nuclear weapons in 2003 due to international pressure and as part of a negotiated agreement with the Europeans. The report stated that even if Tehran were to restart its program, it would not have enough highly enriched uranium for a weapon until 2010 at the earliest.

The NIE is widely seen as a decisive blow to the neoconservatives and Bush administration hawks who have been advocating a preemptive attack on Iran, depriving them of their principle *casus belli*. They have counterattacked, claiming that the report is based on flawed information or even Iranian disinformation, that the CIA has a history of poor analysis of proliferation issues, and that a politicized intelligence community is out to get the White House and/or Israel.

The political landscape in Washington has not yet shifted dramatically. By demonstrating that Iran has acted as a rational player, the report gives advocates of negotiations without preconditions a stronger hand. Those who still seek war have already re-written their talking points. They argue that as Iranian intentions and plans remain suspect, Teheran must be denied any ability to enrich uranium. On Dec. 4, President Bush stated that the military option remains on the table, while warning seven times that Tehran might use "knowledge" of how to enrich uranium to secretly construct a bomb. Other administration spokesmen have insisted that Iran must be denied the engineering infrastructure to manage the nuclear fuel cycle, even for peaceful purposes. The White House has asserted that it still regards Iran as its major foreign-policy problem.

An alarmed Israel, where the report's conclusions have been rejected by both

politicians and media, is considering taking unilateral action against the principle Iranian nuclear facility at Natanz. If Israel were to attack Iran, it would need Washington's help, and U.S. forces would almost certainly be involved in any Iranian retaliation.

The history of how the NIE was developed provides an effective rebuke to those attacking it. Since late 2006, the White House has been aware that the NIE would not confirm the existence of an Iranian weapons program. In January 2007, John Negroponte resigned as director of national intelligence because he backed his analysts and refused to order the rewriting of the key judgments that appeared in the NIE draft. Vice President Dick Cheney's office subsequently demanded several revisions and numerous reviews of the source material. Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell is loyal to the president, but, like Negroponte, was unwilling to alter the conclusions for the White House, and the administration eventually became resigned to a final report that it knew would contradict policy.

Contrary to administration claims, when conclusive new intelligence demonstrating that the Iranians had cancelled their weapons program became available in early summer 2007, the White House was informed. It is no coincidence that President Bush and his aides soon began to downplay Iranian nukes and started to emphasize "they're killing our soldiers" to make its case against Tehran. In November, McConnell, under pressure from Congress to finish the NIE, agreed to White House demands that it be kept classified, but when the report was finally completed a month later, an unclassified summary was prepared because of concerns that inevitable leaks by Democrats in Congress would make it appear that the administration was again deceiving the American people.

The actual NIE process makes clear how impossible it would be to cook the books in order to damage the administration. Sixteen separate intelligence agencies contribute to the report and must concur on key judgments. In the case of the Iran NIE, every detail of evidence for the report's conclusions was looked at repeatedly and from all angles. In the classified version, there are more than 1,500 footnotes describing the sources used. When the draft came to tentative conclusions, the findings were attacked by analysts acting as a "red team" to determine if there were flaws in the analysis or whether Iranian disinformation was being used to mislead CIA analysts. This process was repeated over and over again until everyone was satisfied with the results. A final no-holds-barred review took place in the White House in mid-November, attended by Bush, Cheney, Robert Gates, Condoleezza Rice, and senior staff members, where objections to sourcing and conclusions were aired. No agenda-driven judgments could possibly survive the process.

The claim that the CIA has historically had trouble reporting accurately on proliferation is based on the 2002 and 2005 Iraq and Iran NIE's. Reporting on Russia, China, India, Pakistan, and the A.Q. Khan network was also flawed. But the 2007 Iran NIE should be judged on its merits because intelligence is not a science but a process, based on the best assessment of available information.

After the fiasco of the Iraq NIE, the Agency took a hard look at what had gone wrong. It decided that there were three issues that produced bad analysis: poor information sources resulting in "garbage in, garbage out," political pressure to make the intelligence match the policy, and "groupthink" where assumptions based on past intelligence shape the current analysis.

To address the poor information problem, the Agency launched a major

operation against Iran designated the "Persian House," involving 175 case officers and 35 analysts. It also aggressively went after traveling Iranian officials and businessmen in Europe and the Persian Gulf, most particularly in Dubai, where the Iranian government actively does business to avoid sanctions enforced elsewhere. The effort was successful and, combined with improved technical collection against Iran, provided a window into the Iranian nuclear program. Key information came from Ali Resa Asghari, a general in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, who was recruited in 2003 and jointly run by the CIA and the Turkish intelligence service, MIT. Before defecting in Istanbul in February, Asghari provided critical intelligence on the Iranian program as well as on Tehran's defense communications, permitting the NSA and CIA to obtain still more information. The intelligence available to analysts on Iran improved dramatically.

Both the Iraq NIE and the 2005 NIE on Iran suffered from White House staffers, mostly neoconservatives from Vice President Cheney's office, participating in the review process. To deal with the problem of such political pressure, Director of Central Intelligence Michael Hayden and DNI Mike McConnell isolated analysts from policymakers and also took steps to deal with the groupthink problem. In the 2002 Iraq NIE, the consensus view that Saddam Hussein must have weapons of mass destruction influenced analysis, but proved to be untrue. The Iran NIE was instead constructed from the ground up with every assumption being challenged. The critics of the NIE curiously engage in their own groupthink when they claim that the CIA's record of failures in the past mean that it has likely failed again. This time, however, the CIA has gotten it right. ■

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# The Paleocon Dilemma

The Ron Paul campaign illustrates the choices facing the antiwar Right.

By W. James Antle III

RON PAUL isn't just running for president. The antiwar 10-term congressman from Texas hopes that as titular head of the Republican Party, he can nudge the Right in a less interventionist direction, both at home and abroad. In fact, reviving an older, less reflexively hawkish conservatism may even be a more important motivation for Paul's long-shot campaign than actually capturing the GOP nomination.

There's just one problem: the movement Paul is trying to lead, or at least influence, is filled with people who think he is some kind of crazed left-wing radical. The popular conservative website RedState.com has effectively banned Paul supporters from signing up as commenters and promoting their candidate, partly on the grounds that such people are liberal Democrats merely pretending to be Republicans. FreeRepublic.com founder Jim Robinson, whose website was once more open to constitutionalists than Republican boosters, asserted that "Paul equals Hillary on the War." *National Review* senior editor Richard Brookhiser has opined that Paul backers are "wicked idiots."

Syndicated columnist Mona Charen dubbed Paul a "kook," saying that although he shouldn't be president, "[h]e might make a dandy new leader for the Branch Davidians." Dean Barnett of *The Weekly Standard* devoted a similar piece to taunts along these lines, calling Paul the "crank-in-chief" and "undisputed owner of the "'Don't tase me bro' vote." Averring that "Crazy people love to have a cause," Barnett observes that "America's lunatics" have

"taken such a shine to the formerly obscure Ron Paul"—since all Paul really wants is to "wear a powdered wig without being ridiculed in public."

When not dismissing Paul as too far to the Left, his conservative critics allege that he has ties to unsavory elements of the far Right. Political journalist Ryan Sager, who has described Paul's fundraising success and modest rise in the polls as a "crackpot revolution," told *New York Sun* readers, "it's also worth noting that [Paul is] pretty racist and also an anti-Semite." Ron Rosenbaum, writing on his blog for Pajamas Media, said that Paul might not be an anti-Semite, but "some of his followers exhibit some disturbing tendencies."

The feeling is mutual. Not to be outdone, Paul's proponents can be equally vitriolic in describing other Republicans and large parts of the mainstream Right. The paleolibertarian LewRockwell.com has emerged as an indispensable source of news about Paul's campaign, but few if any of the website's contributors think much of the party that Paul is trying to lead. During a Florida debate held by various social conservative groups, the site's bloggers repeatedly called the sponsors "Fallowelofascists"—and then applauded when Paul placed second in the Fallowelofascists' straw poll.

Although a decade ago Lew Rockwell hoped to mobilize grassroots conservatives on behalf of anti-statism, during the Bush era he has detected a whiff of "red-state fascism" among the Republican base. Other LewRockwell.com writers prefer terms like "neoonofascist."

GOP frontrunner Rudy Giuliani is often affectionately called "Benito."

Such sentiments aren't limited to Paul's supporters in the blogosphere. Attending a Paul rally, it quickly becomes clear that the other Republicans are hardly more acceptable than Hillary Clinton to most of those in attendance. At a recent GOP straw poll in Virginia (which Paul won), Paulites shouted over former Virginia governor and future U.S. Senate candidate Jim Gilmore. At other events, they have drowned out Giuliani, and some witnesses on a Mackinac Island Ferry ride claim a band of Paul supporters once threatened to literally drown Giuliani by throwing him overboard.

The mutual hostility illustrates an enduring problem for those described as paleoconservatives—an unsatisfactory but familiar term that is increasingly applied to all conservatives who reject the foreign and many of the domestic policies of the Bush administration. The paleos and their allies wish to vie for the term "conservative" while being held in contempt by many—perhaps most—Americans who understand themselves to be conservatives while also returning that contempt in equal measure. Call it the paleo dilemma.

While dissident conservatives have many disagreements, their tactical differences speak most directly to this problem. Some paleoconservatives prefer to work within the mainstream movement, hoping to take it back from those they view as squatters. Others believe that movement is either too far gone, or was fatally flawed from the



beginning, and instead seek to forge a “real Right” that will supplant mainstream conservatism. A third group believes that changing American foreign policy should take precedence over all other ideological concerns and therefore favors the creation of a Left-Right anti-neoconservative coalition.

In the Ron Paul campaign, there are elements of all three approaches—each of which has obvious flaws. It is difficult to see how a “real Right” could be politically viable in the United States’ non-parliamentary system of government. Many paleos hope that the recent growth of right-wing parties in Europe portends the eventual defeat of multiculturalism and transnational leftism, but the trend could just as easily represent the Right’s last gasp. And one needn’t agree with David Frum’s indictment of “Unpatriotic Conservatives” to envision how easily hard-Right politics attracts undesirables and worse—true racists, anti-Semites, fascists, and neo-Nazis.

Left-Right coalitions are similarly problematic. They almost never end up being dominated by the Right. John O’Sullivan’s dictum that all organizations that are not explicitly right-wing become left-wing over time applies to most of the groups that have sprung up in opposition to the Iraq War. Every anti-war conservative has at some point been confronted by his ideological brethren with the antics of MoveOn.org or ANSWER’s communist ties. However effective trans-ideological alliances can be when working together on an ad hoc basis, the politics of strange bedfellows has its limits.

The media has taken notice of Paul’s support from across the political spectrum, and so have the candidate’s conservative detractors. A McClatchy News Service dispatch on pro-Paul crowds observed, “There are people who supported Democrat Howard Dean four years ago and others who backed con-

servative Republican Pat Buchanan in the 1990s.” Republicans apparatchiks often cite Paul’s more liberal supporters as evidence that his campaign is some kind of left-wing conspiracy within the GOP. Liberals for Paul could also be a liability in a more practical sense—they are less likely to be eligible to vote for him.

Potentially more damaging is the small but vocal group of genuine racists who have gravitated toward Paul in order to attach themselves to a more mainstream figure, as well as the kind of generic malcontents that Canadian conservative leader Preston Manning once described as “bugs drawn to the light.” A \$500 contribution from neo-Nazi Don Black, combined with the campaign’s ineffectual response, tarnished a positive news cycle that would have otherwise been dominated by Paul’s impressive fundraising. If Paul’s multimillion-dollar hauls are accompanied by further improvement in the polls, support from people like Black will only become a bigger problem.

But by virtue of running for the Republican presidential nomination, Paul has staked his campaign on working within the party and the mainstream conservative movement. If he does not run as a third-party candidate in the general election—and so far he is insisting that he won’t—his success will be determined by how effectively he does so. In New Hampshire and nationwide, several polls show Paul hovering just below the double digits in surveys that mainly capture his more conventional Republican supporters. That puts Paul roughly where Huckabee was when the press started taking the former Arkansas governor seriously this summer.

At this writing, Paul hasn’t had a Huckabee-style surge into the top tier. A major impediment: the binary Left-to-Right political spectrum. While Paul’s Republican supporters usually consider him the most conservative candidate,

many other likely GOP voters consider his outspoken opposition to the Iraq War an inherently liberal position. When Paul began expressing his antiwar views in forums with his party’s other presidential contenders, the head of the Michigan Republican Party—backed by a bevy of conservative commentators like columnist Michelle Malkin—advocated his exclusion from future debates.

The very idea that one could be conservative and yet also dissent from the Bush Doctrine seems inconceivable to some party regulars. “These days, according to some loudmouths,” wrote conservative homeschooling activist and Paul supporter Isabel Lyman, “I have more in common with the ‘antiwar moonbats’ that hold Sunday peace rallies in [Amherst, Massachusetts] than the Republicans that are presently in power.”

Ron Paul isn’t alone. His House colleague Walter Jones faces one of the most spirited Republican primary challenges in the country due to similar partisan and ideological constraints. Since his election in 1994, Jones has been known as one of the most conservative members of Congress. His lifetime American Conservative Union rating is 91.9 percent, and he achieved a perfect score four times. Jones supported the initial invasion of Iraq and famously led the charge to designate French-fried potatoes “freedom fries” on congressional menus in protest of France’s opposition.

Jones hasn’t changed his views on the Bush tax cuts, which he still favors, or abortion, which he adamantly opposes. But he has turned against the war in Iraq. Jones now believes his pro-war vote was a mistake and has been trying to make amends by supporting multiple bills aimed at securing a U.S. withdrawal. He has also introduced a resolution requiring the president to get Congress’ approval before widening the war into Iran.

These positions have cost Jones the support of many Republican leaders in his heavily military North Carolina district, which houses Camp Lejeune and voted 68 percent for President Bush in 2004. It has also attracted a GOP primary opponent, whose website purports to document “Walter Jones’ shift to the political left.” While there are a few debatable domestic-policy votes in the challenger Joe McLaughlin’s dossier, most of the indictment features votes related to the war.

The particulars: Jones is one of two Republicans to vote twice for a Democratic bill that included a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq. He also voted against the Military Commissions Act, which set guidelines for “enhanced interrogation” of terror detainees, and an extension of the Patriot Act. Jones is one of only four House Republicans with a consistently antiwar voting record. The site features photographs of Jones with his “new liberal friends,” including Cindy Sheehan and Dennis Kucinich (half the pictures also include Paul).

According to McLaughlin’s campaign website, Jones is the most liberal Republican in the South—they claim 10 congressional Democrats are more conservative—and the third most likely Republican to vote with Democrats. Of course, *National Journal’s* ratings system penalizes conservatives for opposing the party leadership from the right as well as the left, which is why scores of such mainstream Republicans as Jeff Flake and John Sununu have taken a hit.

Concerning Jones’s foreign-policy independence, American Conservative Union chairman David Keene—in a *Hill* column otherwise critical of Jones for voting with the Democrats on the war—acknowledged that “many conservatives share Jones’s misgivings about the way our role in Iraq has morphed from liberator to policeman and nation-builder.”

Yet Jones’s break with his fellow Republicans on the war has led him to cast votes that make it difficult to continue working within the party. He has criticized the talk-show hosts Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity, both popular among GOP primary voters, and referred to their more partisan listeners as “Kool-Aid drinkers.” FoxNews drew Jones into the Limbaugh “phony soldiers” controversy. He has supported some Democratic earmarks, a fact that McLaughlin cites with relish, and Jones has voted to advance articles of impeachment against Vice President Dick Cheney, a minority position even among congressional Democrats.

Jones’s story is a classic example of the paleo dilemma. For breaking with President Bush and the Republican congressional leaders on an issue that for many Americans defines the Left-Right divide, he is called a liberal by politicians who in many cases have less conservative records than he. Jones responds to the attacks by distancing himself even further from the GOP leadership with which he has grown disillusioned, sometimes voting with a minority of Democrats and just a handful of members of his own party.

There are Republicans who have opposed the war without apparently endangering their political careers—Jones’s House colleagues John Duncan of Tennessee and Howard Coble of North Carolina come to mind. But they are few. They are also conservatives for whom opposition to the Bush foreign policy is important, but not the defining issue. For many on the Right, however—both hawk and dove—Iraq isn’t just one issue. It is the only issue.

For that reason, the editors of *The Weekly Standard* would likely vote for a liberal hawk like Joe Lieberman—or perhaps even Hillary Clinton—over an antiwar Republican. And Paul, despite his obvious desire to remain a Republican,

would surely refrain from endorsing any of his rivals for the nomination because of their foreign-policy positions.

Some even view the paleo-neo divide itself as the most important political issue. Paul Gottfried, for example, has praised Paul’s staff (which he describes as “honeycombed with paleolibertarians and paleoconservatives”) as “people itching to settle scores with the neocon usurpers of the American Right.” Gottfried regards Hillary Clinton as the “lesser evil” compared to Giuliani. Similarly, Bill Kristol told the *New York Times* in 2004 he would vote for John Kerry over Pat Buchanan “or any of the lesser Buchananites on the right.”

In this climate, do paleos have a future in American politics as something other than an intellectual curiosity? Perhaps their best ideas, at least, do. As recently as the 1990s, the Right seemed open to non-interventionism. No less a neoconservative than Jeane Kirkpatrick hoped that our Cold War victory meant the United States could be “a normal country in a normal time.” Despite *The Weekly Standard’s* protestations, Buchanan finished second in the 1996 GOP primaries, and a majority of Republican congressmen opposed the Kosovo War. The trend toward the immigration-restrictionist position has continued even through the Bush administration’s amnesty advocacy.

Ultimately, this will be the real test of whether Ron Paul’s campaign is a success, even more than the number of votes he receives in the Republican primaries: Will his campaign be the start of a movement that will endure past 2008? Or will it be remembered as a brief, eccentric, and incoherent coalition? The answer will reveal much about the future of the paleoconservative project. ■

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# Faith of His Fathers

If Mitt Romney wins the Republican nomination, it will be due in large measure to his splendid and moving defense of his faith delivered Dec. 6 at the George Bush

Presidential Library.

The address was courageous in a way John F. Kennedy's speech to the Baptist ministers was not. Kennedy went to Houston to assure the ministers he agreed with them on virtually every issue where they differed with the Catholic agenda and that his faith would not affect any decision he made as president. He called himself "the Democratic Party's candidate for president who happens also to be a Catholic."

It was like saying: "I happen to be left-handed. I can't help it."

Romney did not truckle. He did not suggest that his faith was irrelevant to the formation of his political philosophy. While declaring, "I will serve no one religion, no one group, no one cause and no one interest," he did not back away an inch from his Mormon faith.

"There are some for whom these commitments are not enough," said Romney. "They would prefer it if I would simply distance myself from my religion, say that it is more a tradition than my personal conviction, or disavow one or another of its precepts. That I will not do. I believe in my Mormon faith, and I endeavor to live by it. My faith is the faith of my fathers. I will be true to them and to my beliefs."

"If this costs me the presidency," said Romney, "so be it."

That is the kind of defiance this country can never hear enough of.

What Romney was saying was if you so dislike or resent my faith you will not

vote for me if I stay true to it, don't vote for me. But that may say more about you than it does about me.

Questioned repeatedly on what he, as a Mormon, believes about Jesus Christ, a matter crucial to evangelicals, Romney replied, "What do I believe about Jesus Christ? I believe that Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of mankind. My church's beliefs about Christ may not all be the same as those of other faiths. Each religion has its own unique doctrines and history. These are not bases for criticism but rather a test of our tolerance. Religious tolerance would be a shallow principle if it were reserved only for faiths with which we agree." Surely that is right.

After defending his own faith, Romney declared himself a fighting ally of traditionalists and conservatives in the culture war against a militant secularism that is hostile to all faiths rooted in supernatural beliefs and that seeks to de-Christianize America.

"[T]he notion of separation of church and state has been taken by some beyond its original meaning," Romney said. "They seek to remove from the public domain any acknowledgement of God. Religion is seen as merely a private affair with no place in the public life. It is as if they are intent on establishing a new religion in America—the religion of secularism. They are wrong."

"We should acknowledge the Creator as did the Founders—in ceremony and word. He should remain in our currency, in our pledge, in the teaching of our

history and, during the holiday seasons, Nativity scenes and Menorahs should be welcome in our public places."

Romney understands that while the First Amendment proscribes the establishment of religion, it guarantees the free expression of all religions, even in the public school. Supreme Court, take note. "I will not separate us from the God who gave us liberty," said Romney.

This was a *tour de force*, and it was delivered before perhaps the largest audience Romney will have for any speech before the January caucuses and primaries. It will be the subject of editorials and columns in coming weeks. And it is hard to see how Romney does not benefit hugely from what was a quintessentially "American" address.

With this speech, Romney has thrown on the defensive his main rival in Iowa, Mike Huckabee, the Christians' candidate who, when asked if Mormonism is a cult, left the impression it might well be.

The issues of religious tolerance, what it means to be a Christian in politics, and secularism versus traditionalism are all now out on the table and will likely be the social-moral issues on which the race turns between now and January.

To this writer, Romney is on unassailable grounds. Nor is he hurt by the fact that his wife and five children testify eloquently that he is a man of principles who lives by them.

Mike Huckabee's ascendancy and Romney's address defending his faith, refusing to disavow his beliefs and making this a test of tolerance while launching an offensive against secular humanism, tell us that God is back—in the presidential campaign. ■

# Devaluing Doctrine

Do religious teachings matter to religious conservatives? Mitt Romney hopes not. If they do, his appeal to America's "great moral inheritance" will be in vain, and

his religious confession will doom his presidential bid.

"Americans tire of those who would jettison their beliefs, even to gain the world," Romney declared in his speech at the Bush Library. It seems that there are still a few beliefs the former governor will not alter for the sake of political expediency. But he has a problem: according to a recent poll by the Pew Research Center, at least a quarter of all Americans and over a third of evangelicals are less likely to vote for a Mormon. Apparently there are still some candidates many Americans would jettison because of their beliefs, and Romney has the misfortune of being one of them.

Anti-Mormonism is an attitude shared by voters from all backgrounds and both parties (being slightly more common among Democrats than Republicans), but finds its strongest and most explicit expression among evangelical Christians. They make up more than a third of likely caucus-goers in Iowa and over half of the Republican primary electorate in South Carolina, the two early states where Romney's campaign has been struggling in recent weeks. Having invested so heavily in organizing and advertising in the early states as part of his traditional primary strategy, Romney's campaign cannot politically afford defeats in both places. Yet it seems increasingly likely that neither will break his way.

Romney's religion predicament is a classic no-win situation. His opponents in the Republican electorate cannot be persuaded to accept something they regard

as inherently flawed and dangerous to salvation, which is how seriously many of them take this, while Romney cannot accommodate his critics without conceding fundamental beliefs. In trying to square this circle, Romney only encouraged more discussion of his religion without providing the kind of straight talk that skeptical and curious conservatives want.

Having goaded him into making it, the media agreed that Romney's speech was going to be a disaster. They assumed that he would address the issue of anti-Mormonism and would have to navigate the treacherous waters of affirming his own religious faith without antagonizing a large bloc of religious conservative voters whose support he needs. In the end, it was merely a mistake. While he made basic concessions to largely non-existent fears that he would be taking orders from LDS church authorities and rejected mythical calls for him to abandon his beliefs, he mostly refused to address the main issue that had occasioned the speech in the first place. As he has done so often before, Romney avoided the question.

Instead, he framed his remarks in terms of maintaining a united religious conservative front against "the religion of secularism" while preserving the "vibrancy of our religious dialogue." By endorsing a strong public role for religion, however vaguely defined, and declaring his faith in Christ as "the Son of God and the Savior of mankind," Romney drew attention once more to his own religion, about which he had virtually

nothing substantive to say. Having made one religious confession in his speech, he argued that discussing anything else about his religion amounted to an unconstitutional test, rendering his position both incoherent and misinformed.

He delivered what was, by most estimates, an effective speech, but if the target audience was skeptical Christian voters, it failed in a number of ways. Instead of stressing his religion's political irrelevance, Romney made his religion more of a legitimate subject and target of criticism than before. He has validated the basic assumptions of his fiercest critics by stating his strong support for a public role for religion.

At stake in all this is the definition of what religious conservatism will be in America. The outcome will also reveal whether Christians view the role of religion in public life as essentially instrumental. If that becomes the case, something significant will be lost. For a religious conservatism defined solely by "shared values" will eventually become unmoored from the theological truths that give values their foundation and enduring meaning, and increasing religious diversity will throw into doubt what these "shared values" really are.

Anti-Mormonism in electoral politics is just one reaction against the progressive devaluation of religious truth in a largely secularized public square. If faith is going to have an increased role, it seems unavoidable that the vague rhetoric will lose ground to arguments derived from specific claims of revelation.

If Christian conservatives yield to the logic of Romney's "values" alliance, they should not be surprised if their doctrines become as irrelevant to public life as Romney wants them to be for elections. ■



# Steeple Chase

Capturing South Carolina's crucial "hymn-book" vote requires the right balance of religiosity and ruthlessness.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

NORTH CHARLESTON—In the back of a Holiday Inn reception room, Howard Wood tells how he came to know the man the room is waiting to see. His face sags around his smile as he recounts the story: "I pray about these things often, so I asked the Lord, 'Which of these men running for president do you want me to pray for?' and the name came to me, 'Mike Huckabee.' I'd never heard of him before." I ask, "Are you saying God is violating the separation of Church and State and making an endorsement?" Wood smiles. A lady nearby leans in, "Now that's free advertising!"

Despite a huge influx of "pocket-book voters" from the Northeast and several statewide electoral wins by moderates like Gov. Mark Sanford, the "hymn-book" vote still comprises the largest bloc of voters in South Carolina's Jan. 29 primary. The major contenders in both parties are scrambling to capture the endorsements of pastors and tap into the social networks of church members in the state. This dash to the altar can bring out the devil in campaign consultants and candidates alike, tempting them to use fly-by-night attack websites, send e-mail smears through church lists, and even buy pastors' support.

Huckabee's remarkable rise from single-digit polling and non-existent fundraising is hard to explain short of divine intervention. In recent weeks, polls have shown him gaining a formidable lead in Iowa over Mitt Romney. In South Carolina, in the first week of December, Huckabee polled first in the

state. Without airing a commercial, he had jumped 20 points in four months.

Winthrop University political scientist Scott Huffmon attributes Huckabee's success to the consolidation of the white evangelical vote: "Evangelicals are not as homogenous as most pundits would claim, but they occasionally gel around an issue or a candidate to appear as a huge voting bloc. They would have rallied around Huckabee earlier, if there wasn't the intervening factor of Hillary Clinton" who, Huffmon explains, initially caused them to hesitantly embrace "candidates who are antithetical to them, like Giuliani."

Romney has also courted social conservatives and churchgoers in the state, slowly climbing from 7 percent in August polls, then peaking in November at 21 percent. But this summer, Fred Thompson's Southern accent and a more credible record on social issues threatened to undo Romney in this crucial early primary. As Thompson's entrance became inevitable, a website called "Phoney Fred" suddenly appeared. Under the headline "PLAYBOY FRED," the site treated viewers to crudely Photoshopped pictures of Fred cavorting with various women to whom he's been linked romantically. The *Washington Post* eventually traced the site to the consulting firm owned by Walter Tompkins, hired by the Romney campaign. Tompkins captained George W. Bush's 2000 efforts in the state, leading many to think he was behind the vicious smears that ended John McCain's candidacy.

But despite his massive investments, Romney's campaign has stalled. In the past month, he has dropped more than 5 points in the polls and continues to bleed supporters to the surging Huckabee.

"Without question," says Will Folks, "the dirtiest campaigners in South Carolina are the ones who represent the family-values candidates. No question about it. They're going after the hymn-book vote, but the methods are satanic. The leader of that is Tompkins." Folks led the communications efforts of Mark Sanford's successful gubernatorial campaign in 2002 against the negative campaign of the family-values candidate Lt. Gov. Bob Peeler. "South Carolina isn't the sharpest tool in the shed," Folks says, "But our people do know how to spot a fake. I think the rise of Huckabee is due more to the authenticity of the candidate than any other factor."

Huckabee knows how to sell that quality well. His first South Carolina television commercial flashed the word "Authentic" over a picture of him leaning against a fence.

At the Gateway Baptist Church in Irmo, the former preacher opens his sermon by saying, "I want you to really absolutely understand that I'm here to talk about Jesus and not to talk about me. There's a place for politics, but when I come to church, I want to worship." He goes on to speak about the importance of family to society and how it reflects God's love. He may say that he's not practicing politics, but the congregants get the message: he is one of

us. The word of mouth these sermons generate is invaluable. "He keeps doing the right things," Huffmon explains, "if he knocks the mantle of inevitability off Romney in Iowa, that white evangelical vote will gel, and he'll win it here."

Just as the white evangelical vote often determines the Republican victor, churches are also key to any Democratic strategy. Blacks make up just over 50 percent of the Democratic vote, and according to a September Winthrop/ETV poll, over 90 percent of blacks reported attending church at least once a month. Winning a solid majority of these voters would nearly guarantee a primary victory in a three-way race. Commenting on the poll, Winthrop's co-director of African American Studies, Dr. Adolphus Belk, said, "Early on, African Americans threw their support to Hillary Clinton, primarily based on the Clinton legacy. However, as African-American voters have gotten to know Barack Obama, support for him has

that as pastor, Jackson says that Obama may be a good friend, but Hillary is "our best shot." Putting the argument that a black man cannot win on the national stage on the lips of one of the state's most prominent black preachers is incredibly valuable.

Obama has also been the victim of a whispering campaign that focuses on his unique upbringing. His South Carolina staffers call it the "Muslim issue." An e-mail circulating around the state shows a picture of Obama during the Pledge of Allegiance, only the young senator doesn't have his hand over his heart. The e-mail falsely explains that this is because he is really a Wahabbi Muslim. It ends by urging everyone to "Please forward this to everyone you know. The Muslims have said they plan on destroying the US from the inside out, what better way to start than at the highest level." Two Hillary staffers have recently been caught sending e-mails similar to this.

the smear, allowing Obama to discuss his Christian upbringing and enabling his campaign to find local "influentials"—people who occupy positions of authority in what are often hierarchical congregations.

Kevin Griffis, an Obama spokesman, explains that their support goes up as they present two arguments to black voters. The first is that Obama won a hotly contested primary election in Illinois, beating several whites. The second argument "is a moral argument that [his campaign] is the continuation of the civil-rights movement."

Obama has embraced the civil-rights angle in his retooled stump speech. To the crowd of over 30,000 that Oprah helped attract, he cast himself as the natural next step in a long struggle. "I don't like when people tell me I can't do something," he shouted, adopting a preacher's cadence. "It gets me riled up." He said that he is only on a stage because of people who came before him. His voice rises: "A few people stood up when they were told they couldn't. And then thousands stood up! And then millions stood up and said, 'We can change things!'" The crowd jumped and shouted. Voting for Obama was no longer a mere option but the fulfillment of a promise.

High ideals motivate many voters in South Carolina: evangelicals wish to shore up the family, and blacks want to realize the dreams of civil-rights leaders. But everyone expects the campaigns to get dirtier. "I think there will be an escalation of the whispering campaign against Obama," Folks predicts. "People are going to go down the 'Hillary Clinton is a lesbian' route. They are going to go after Huckabee on fiscal issues and the pardon [of a rapist]. Let's be honest, South Carolina has never been a place where the Lincoln-Douglas style of campaigning has ever been in vogue." ■

## DESPITE HAVING THE **BEST PASTOR MONEY CAN BUY** AND A SMEAR CAMPAIGN THAT IS RUNNING WITH LITTLE DIRECTION, **CLINTON'S DOUBLE-DIGIT LEAD IS CRUMBLING.**

increased significantly. The real tipping point in the Democratic primary election may be undecided African-American female voters."

But the Clinton campaign won't give up its support among blacks easily. Recently, both the Clinton and Obama campaigns released lists of black pastors who endorsed them. Prominent on Clinton's list was Pastor Darrell Jackson, who heads Bible Way Church in Columbia, one of the largest black congregations in the state. Jackson is also a member of the state Senate and the owner of one of the most prized political consulting firms for Democrats. Jackson's firm is paid \$10,000 a month by the Clinton campaign. It is no wonder then

"That stuff is aimed at the barber shops," explains Folks, "and you get there through the faith-based community. It's absurd, of course, but you get a few people talking about it, and then everyone is talking about it, and then Obama has a problem."

Despite having the best pastor money can buy and a smear campaign that is running with little direction, Clinton's double-digit lead in the state is crumbling. A recent Mason-Dixon poll puts Obama within three points. An Insider Advantage Survey released after Obama's recent appearance with Oprah in Columbia had him up by 6 points. Holding frequent "Faith Forums" in the state has been an effective rebuttal to

# Paper Pushers

The Fed cannot print oil, a fact Americans will find increasingly inconvenient.

By Wilson Burman

THE POST-SUMMER driving season is usually a forgiving time at the pump. But this year there was a detour on the road to lower year-end gas prices, which instead hit a record average high of over \$3 a gallon. On Nov. 15, just a few days before oil surged to almost \$100 a barrel, the headline on a wire story read, "Gas hitting record highs for holiday travel." On that same day, another seemingly unrelated headline read, "Fed makes biggest temporary injection since '01." Coincidence?

As the price of oil has marched higher during the past few years, the media has latched on to various one-time or "temporary" explanations: unrest in Nigeria, refinery problems in Texas, weather in the North Sea, pipeline disruptions in Iraq. Just before tensions boiled over along the Turkish-Kurd border in mid-October, oil was trading at \$80. News reports cited a potential military incursion by Turkey as the reason for oil's subsequent rise. That incursion still hadn't happened by early November, but oil was \$96. "Strong demand" is another oft cited excuse, and this one has more merit. There's no doubt that global growth and its impact on the supply/demand ratio is an important factor. But during the last few years, and with increasing velocity, the rise in price has far outpaced demand. Between January and November 2007, the price of oil surged 92 percent. Those storms in the North Sea must have been pretty bad.

It's only recently that another explanation has started to appear, albeit mostly as an afterthought near the bottom of news reports: the weak dollar.

This is not an easy storyline for the mainstream media. Most people don't—and don't want to—understand the relationship between the price at the pump and the value of what's in their wallets.

The word "liquidity" entered public discourse this year when problems in the subprime housing market surfaced during the summer. Liquidity can mean different things. Essentially, it's the byproduct of daily Federal Reserve operations that maintain short-term interest rates. To prevent rates from rising above its announced target level, the Fed pumps money into the financial system.

So on a day-to-day basis, liquidity is the tool of a broader interest-rate policy. The two go hand in hand. But liquidity is powerful, and its effects don't stop there. Nor do the Fed's ambitions. One doesn't need indicators like oil, the dollar, or gold. Wallets tell the story best.

Assumptions about the natural business cycle are part of the dollar's intrinsic value. Ideally, investors expect that when the cycle slows, as the housing market has recently, the dollars accumulated during a strong economy will be worth at least as much, and likely more, when the economy weakens. This is the practical economic dynamic behind the folksy wisdom of "saving something for a rainy day." But it can work in reverse. An important part of inflation is expectations. If investors believe the Federal Reserve will fight economic softness too aggressively, and in the process debase the currency, then the dollar loses both face and intrinsic value.

When this happens, it's noticeable at the gas pump because oil is priced in dollars. But that's only one manifestation of Fed policy. The price of oil also shows up in food, clothing, building materials, highway tolls, and mass-transit fares—things everyone knows cost more these days. The government understates inflation in several ways, one of which is stripping out the cost of those daily necessities to arrive at a "core consumer price index." But it's impossible to strip out inflation's dangerous consequences.

There aren't many historical examples of advanced, industrialized nations relying on a combustible mix of debt and fiat money to the extent the U.S. does. Argentina is one, as well as Germany during the early 1920s.

As Germany struggled to pay war debts and boost its industrial sector, it churned out a deluge of paper money. It was a deliberate policy, openly supported by prominent German business leaders like Hugo Stinnes, who ran the equivalent of a Dow Jones-listed company. Rudolph Havenstein, head of Germany's central bank, boasted about the efficiency of his printing presses. German society felt the effects at every level. At the same time a pensioner needed a stack of paper money to buy a cup of coffee, the stock market and the economy soared. In his book *When Money Dies*, Adam Ferguson quotes from the letters of a private citizen:

Speculation on the stock exchange has spread to all ranks of the population and shares rise like air

balloons to limitless heights. My banker congratulates me on every new rise, but he does not dispel the secret uneasiness which my growing wealth arouses in me ... it already amounts to millions.

And from a foreigner in the country on business:

The greatest fraudulent conspiracy in the history of the world is now being enacted in Germany with the full concurrence and active support of its 60 or 70 millions of people. Germany is teeming with wealth. She is humming like a beehive. The comfort and prosperity of her people absolutely astound me. Poverty is practically non-existent. And yet this is the country that is determined she will not pay her debts. ... They are a nation of actors. ... If it wasn't for the fact that the German is guiltless of humor, one might imagine the whole nation was bent on perpetrating an elaborately laborious practical joke.

Sound familiar? Inflation "worked." It was the fuel that created the veneer of prosperity. And it worked most of all for the banks and brokerages that sprouted on every corner, the 20-year-old stock traders, and those who had the savvy and means to protect themselves through hard assets—today's investment bankers, hedge-fund managers, and speculators. To be sure, Germany in the early '20s was an outlier, an extreme example of monetary policy gone awry. But some aspects of our current financial system have very few historical parallels, and that is one of them. It would be foolish to ignore it simply because so much about that era is easily dismissed for its madness.

Asset prices, then, can rise despite deadly underlying weakness. Part of the script for today's financial pundits is the claim that all is well because the equity

markets, though bumpy, generally were at or near all-time or multiyear highs for most of 2007. After the Dow plunged 237 points on Nov. 26, CNBC reported, "Alert: Dow +2.3% year-to-date."

If that's the standard, then it appears all is well. And that's crucial. There's a lot at stake: the Bush fiscal policy must work—or at least appear to. If it doesn't, it will be discredited for a generation or longer, with obvious implications for elections and therefore income and capital-gains taxes.

Thus the pressure on policymakers to take extraordinary measures. After the late-'90s tech bubble burst, the Federal Reserve decided there was never a good time for economic weakness, much less recession. But a basic truism of the financial markets is that there's no free lunch. Periodic recessions cleanse malinvestment and overcapacity. When government believes it has the ability to repeal the natural business cycle, eventually bad things happen.

To keep up appearances, policymakers need to do whatever's necessary to avoid them. And that's what the Fed has done, first by lowering interest rates to a rock-bottom 1 percent and inducing a real-estate bubble in the process, then by responding to every bump in the road with either lower rates or stock market-friendly comments. The financial markets understand political expediency. On Nov. 6, the Fed funds futures suggested a 62 percent chance of a rate cut in December. One day later, after the Dow plunged 360 points, the futures implied that a cut was a near certainty.

The Dow is composed of only a handful of companies, but there's no more important barometer of public psychology. The behavior of that small group of stocks can paper over a lot of distress under the surface. So what happens if that barometer starts to fall and interest-rate policy, a blunt tool that works with a lag, isn't enough? The possibility of

direct intervention in the stock market has been the subject of much debate in the financial community. Some believe that the government—either the Federal Reserve, the Treasury, or a proxy—has intervened in the past to prop up the stock market. If that's indeed the case, a national debate about it should take place. Government-sanctioned intervention in the stock market would have serious implications, including the use of public money to buy stocks while corporate insiders are selling, select Wall Street trading desks profiting from knowledge of the intervention, and the ability to boost the market prior to an election or other event. We know from the past few years that much can be justified when a nation is "at war."

The upshot? Moral hazard. Reckless risk-taking is encouraged because the public believes the government will act as a backstop. On Milton Friedman's 90th birthday in 2002, Ben Bernanke, then a Federal Reserve governor, honored the aged economist with a promise: "Regarding the Great Depression. You're right, we did it. We're very sorry. But thanks to you, we won't do it again." He's done his best to keep that promise.

To be sure, it's important that policymakers encourage risk to some degree. Risk is crucial to capitalism, and it's part of what makes our financial system great. And there are certainly times—post-9/11 being one—when a government backstop is appropriate. But there's a difference between policymakers getting out of the way and actively partnering with speculators.

Whatever one might call that, "conservative" it's not. If conservatism is the preservation of things that are intrinsically valuable, what is conservative about policies that destabilize and debase the dollar? One might argue that optimism and upward mobility are also intrinsically valuable and an integral part of America's national identity. So what does it mean to



go down a road that deadends in mass foreclosures and bankruptcies, millions of unsold homes on the market, families uprooted, and legions of young, experience-hardened cynics?

On Dec. 6, President Bush announced a Treasury-led plan by the mortgage industry to freeze rates for some subprime borrowers. Not to be outdone, Hillary Clinton came out with a more ambitious proposal. As politicians trip over themselves in an election year to mitigate unpleasant consequences, the rest of the world will no doubt be watching nervously. It's ironic that a rediscovery of the intrinsically valuable might be forced on us by foreigners. As holders of dollar-denominated assets, they have a keen understanding of moral hazard and the role of the nanny state. That might not matter in a less interdependent world. But since U.S. dollars are the world's de facto reserve currency, foreigners have a vested interest in the dollar's value.

The rising tension is unmistakable. On Nov. 7, Xu Jian, a vice director of China's central bank, said the dollar is "losing its status as the world currency." On the same day, Cheng Siwei, vice chairman of China's national parliament, said, "We will favor stronger currencies over weaker ones, and will re-adjust accordingly." In fact, that readjustment has been underway for some time. In August, holdings of U.S. bonds by foreign governments at the Federal Reserve fell 3.8 percent, the largest decline since 1992.

Ominously, the largest oil producers have also made their feelings clear. In July, Iran demanded that Japan pay for oil in yen instead of dollars. At the OPEC summit in November, Hugo Chavez claimed, "the dollar has been in free-fall without a parachute." Venezuela began aggressively moving its foreign currency reserves into euros in 2006. Russia and Indonesia have been doing the same. Since these countries have the gall to question an arrangement in which they

accept depreciating paper for their main (and finite) natural resource, they both complicate and profit from the Fed's efforts to stem economic weakness.

The relationship between oil and the dollar is paramount, for oil is our Achilles heel. Owning all the oil on the planet would free us of a major constraint on monetary policy. Unpleasant and politically inconvenient economic downturns could be avoided, interest rates could stay low longer, the stock and housing markets could rise unfettered, and the nanny state could respond to every inconvenient consequence with freshly printed handouts. But that's not the case, and policies that assume otherwise have put us up against some immutable economic and geopolitical realities. It wasn't a coincidence that those two headlines about gas prices and the Fed appeared on the same day in November. They were really about the same underlying story.

Assume everyone in your town requires an increasing number of widgets. You're in an enviable position: you have the town's only widget-making machine. But your machine is old and past its peak, and you're having trouble meeting the demand. You've had an informal arrangement with your neighbor for many years. He has a machine that produces pieces of paper embossed with the phrase "Good For One Widget." Unlike your machine, however, his never breaks down. This arrangement has generally been acceptable to the people who live in the town; they like the way the "Good For One Widget" pieces of paper look, and they get their widgets when they need them.

Over the past few years, your neighbor has married, started a family, remodeled his house, and grown fond of taking expensive vacations. To pay for all that and meet his own need for an ever increasing amount of widgets, he builds several more "Good For One

Widget" machines and runs them non-stop, day and night. You've also started a family and have your own responsibilities. You wish your machine ran as well as his, and you're starting to worry about what will happen when yours stops running completely and you still have a family to support.

One day your neighbor calls you, complains that the unreliability of your widget machine is affecting him, and demands that you get it running better to meet the rapidly increasing production of his machine. You realize you have a decision to make: try to squeeze as many widgets as possible out of the remaining life of your machine and accept the same amount of paper in return, or let the price of your widgets rise to earn as much as you can while you still have the ability to produce them at all. If you're the widget maker, what's the best choice?

Now assume you own the "Good For One Widget" machine, and your name is Ben Bernanke. Your widget-producing neighbor's name is Abdullah. Does that change your answer?

This is where the rubber meets the road in the great game. It's where bridges to nowhere, Twilight Zone economic statistics, market intervention and bailouts, wars via national credit card, an open-ended occupation, and a Fed official's lofty promise to Milton Friedman are all called to account. Everything about Washington is the art of the possible: whatever can be done is done, until it can't be done any longer. But we cannot print oil. And to the extent we've entered an age in which most wars will be fought not over religion or ethnicity but over natural resources, that has dire implications, as much for those who happen to live above the oil, tragically, as for us. ■

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*Wilson Burman is the pen name for a New York City financial executive who writes The Cunning Realist blog.*

# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*Atonement*]

### Beating Swords Into Plotlines

By Steve Sailer

MANY SUCCESSFUL date movies, such as “Casablanca” and “Gone with the Wind,” combined a love story for the ladies and a war for the gentlemen. With his 2001 bestseller *Atonement*, the immensely clever Ian McEwan pulled off the novelistic equivalent, pasting together a scandalous country-house romance and the fall of France. The film version is a likely nominee for the Best Picture Oscar because it’s yet another purported attack on the English class system that actually revels in gorgeous Period Porn.

McEwan constructed his book not only for both sexes, but also for the middle and upper brows. For the book-buying masses, *Atonement* delivers a premodern melodramatic plot, and for the critics, a postmodern self-conscious commentary on the novelist’s privileges and responsibilities.

One dark night in 1935, Briony, a writing-obsessed 13-year-old rich girl, briefly glimpses a tuxedoed man ravishing her sultry 15-year-old cousin Lola. A budding novelist eager to connect the dots, Briony leaps to the conclusion that the statutory rapist is the housekeeper’s son, Robbie, the ardent new lover of her older sister Cecilia. (Robbie is played by James McAvoy, the callow doctor in

“The Last King of Scotland,” and Cecilia by the bony beauty Keira Knightley of “The Pirates of the Caribbean.”) The more often Briony tells her story to the police, the more she almost believes it.

Five years later, the wronged Robbie is out of prison and in the defeated British Expeditionary Force, trudging toward the beach at Dunkirk, hoping to return finally to the waiting Cecilia. Meanwhile, the 18-year-old Briony pens a novella about the 1935 incident in the style of Virginia Woolf, full of fine writing about “light and stone and water” but no action and sends it to the literary magazine *Horizon*. Its real-life editor, Cyril Connolly, whom Evelyn Waugh often skewered in his books, replies with a kind rejection note, advising that even her “most sophisticated readers ... retain a childlike desire to be told a story, to be held in suspense, to know what happens.” McEwan himself told an interviewer that *Atonement* is an attack on “modernism and its dereliction of duty in relation to what I have Cyril Connolly call ‘the backbone of the plot.’”

Briony struggles with this manuscript (and her guilt) for the rest of her life, completing it only in 1999. In the coda, a TV interview with the 77-year-old Briony (now played, majestically as always, by Vanessa Redgrave), we learn that the story we’ve just watched is her 21st but most autobiographical book. The elder Briony explains that the happy ending, however, in which her younger self confesses her perjury to the reunited lovers and to the world, is her invention, a respite for her readers from the truth that Robbie died at Dunkirk and Cecilia was soon killed in the Blitz. At the end, Briony wonders, “How can a novelist achieve atonement when, with her

absolute power of deciding outcomes, she is also God?”

“Atonement” the movie is such a faithful adaptation of the book that it never seems to occur to screenwriter Christopher Hampton and director Joe Wright that a film about a novelist playing God is an oxymoron. Authors can act like deities in their pages, but once they sell the film rights, they’re impotent demiurges.

These filmmakers, though, are too in awe of McEwan’s metafiction to notice that the storyline glass is both half-full and half-empty. It’s swell that a vaunted master of contempo lit-fic has gone slumming enough to offer us proles a dramatic plot; but projected 50-feet high on the screen, McEwan’s concoction doesn’t make all that much sense.

Briony’s lie is so shaky that we’re expecting to see next a lurid courtroom donnybrook, complete with, say, a jail-house wedding and witnesses breaking down in tears on the stand *à la* “Perry Mason.” McEwan, however, having ineptly plotted himself into a corner, simply skips ahead a half decade and ushers in World War II to distract us. (And all that McEwan has to say then is that war is a Dantean inferno, something that William Tecumseh Sherman said earlier and better.)

And if “Atonement” is about the power of fiction to harm and heal, what’s the point of having the lovers die in the war? Correct me if I’m wrong, but my impression has always been that WWII wasn’t actually the fault of a 13-year-old girl with an overactive imagination. It was Hitler’s fault. ■

Rated R for disturbing war images, language, and some sexuality.

## BOOKS

*[Camelot and the Cultural Revolution: How the Assassination of John F. Kennedy Shattered American Liberalism, James Piereson, Encounter Books, 176 pages]*

### What Jackie Did Next

By John O'Sullivan

ONE OF THE FOUNDING MYTHS of the American conservative movement is the Goldwater debacle. It tells of how a handful of embattled partisans recognized Senator Goldwater as the natural leader of their fledgling movement; how they nominated him as presidential candidate of the GOP entirely against the will of the party establishment (and largely against the senator's wishes); how Goldwater, after a flawless performance in the primaries, squandered his chances with a campaign of gaffes and blunders; and how, almost miraculously, conservatism rose from the near-death of the anti-Goldwater landslide to defeat liberalism and gain power 16 years later in its more glamorous Reaganite form.

In short, the 1964 election was a pyrrhic defeat for conservatism—a necessary testing that introduced conservatives to each other and erected the first scaffolding of their future organizations.

As myths go, there is a good deal of truth in this account. Both friendly and hostile critics, however, have always pointed to the influence of external events in both the Goldwater debacle and the later recovery of the Right. Most significantly, President Kennedy was assassinated. The original thinking behind the Goldwater candidacy was that he would play the conservative insurgent from the West against a complacent governing liberalism symbolized

by an eastern establishment near-Brahmin from Massachusetts. Goldwater hoped that the campaign would be a series of civilized debates between their two philosophies. The two men liked each other. Kennedy might well have reckoned he could take the moderate risk of elevating his rival in order to ventilate his more eccentric views. If Lee Harvey Oswald had not intervened, the 1964 election might well have been just such a knightly tournament.

Kennedy's assassination and the succession of Lyndon Johnson to the presidency changed all that. Johnson exploited the assassination not only to push through a series of liberal reforms but also to stigmatize—unfairly, brutally, and effectively—Goldwater and the Right as carriers of the “extremism” that had killed Kennedy. Goldwater was destroyed politically by the same bullet that killed Kennedy physically.

By the usual rules of politics, Republican conservatives—however brilliantly they preached and organized—should have been doomed to opposition for a generation or two. Instead, they made impressive gains in the 1966 midterm elections, won the presidency in 1968 and, delayed only briefly by Watergate, placed Reagan in the White House a decade later. Why had the seemingly inevitable gone into reverse?

What happened, according to James Piereson in his closely reasoned, original, and stimulating new book, *Camelot and the Cultural Revolution: How the Assassination of John F. Kennedy Shattered American Liberalism*, is that American liberals committed political suicide. They picked up Oswald's gun and turned it upon themselves. And in the mid-1960s, they made an unmissable target.

In the age of Reid and Pelosi, it's hard to remember that the liberalism of those days was the reigning public philosophy of American life. It dominated the universities, the media, the great foundations, business corporations, labor unions, and (until Goldwater) both political parties. This governing philosophy was very different from today's queru-

lous utopianism. Though it had already drunk deep of statism, it was also meliorist, pragmatic, patriotic, and problem-solving. It embodied the grand compromises of American politics. It believed in containing the Soviet Union but not in rolling it back. It advocated a moderate welfare state resting on a relatively free economy (relative, that is, to Western Europe). It supported the advance of civil rights through federal intervention, but was nervously ambivalent about the “freedom riders.” And because it dominated both parties—it was Eisenhower who had sent troops into Little Rock to enforce desegregation—liberalism seemed to be the immovable center of American politics.

Against this bland Leviathan, two small forces contended in the early days of the Kennedy presidency: the new conservatives clustering around William F. Buckley and *National Review*, founded in 1955, and the new radicalism of Norman Mailer, Allen Ginsberg, and the “Beat” writers. Buckley's conservatives criticized liberalism in practical terms: its suffocating refusal to think clearly about moral and political choices undermined religion, free enterprise, patriotism, and any serious anti-communist foreign policy. The new radicals attacked it more daringly as a form of cultural conservatism. They saw liberalism as a surrender to the bourgeois blandness of the 1950s whereas what was needed was a revolution in consciousness, the family, sex, and education that would transform capitalism far more fundamentally than another welfare program.

In more immediate political terms, the great radical cause was the civil rights “revolution” of the freedom riders, just as the great conservative cause was the liberation of the nations held captive by Soviet communism.

In the early '60s, however, these movements scarcely mattered. Both new conservatives and new radicals were such fringe phenomena that complacent liberals began talking of the necessity of encouraging conservatism as a necessary (though naturally subordinate)

counterpoint to liberal ideals. At the same time, whenever strong popular resistance to liberalism actually emerged, whether McCarthyism or the Ku Klux Klan, they denounced it as an irrational or even psychotic phenomenon. In effect, liberals assumed they could determine both government policies and the proper limits of opposition.

Only a political earthquake, it seemed, could overturn such a stable dominance. That earthquake duly appeared in the form of Lee Harvey Oswald's assassination of President Kennedy. Piereson's first original (and brilliant) insight is his recognition that what transformed American politics was not the assassination itself but how it was interpreted.

Kennedy was slain by a devout communist, one-time defector to the Soviet Union, and admirer of Fidel Castro who had kept in touch with Soviet diplomats after returning from the USSR and was trying to re-defect to Cuba. A common-sense interpretation of the crime would have portrayed Kennedy as an anti-communist martyr of the conservative cause in the Cold War. Oswald himself would almost certainly have endorsed that interpretation. Such a view would have made the Cold War—rather than civil rights—the central issue in U.S. politics; it would have given credibility to Goldwater's hard-line anti-communism; and it might even have produced a different election result in 1964. But such an account would also have been contrary to the emerging "spirit of the age," which dictated to commentators a very different analysis.

Before anyone knew the identity of Kennedy's assassin, his death was at once and widely attributed in media speculations to "extremists" and "bigots" on the Right. This was not wholly without basis. By late 1963, the civil-rights revolution in the South had boiled over and elicited violent racist resistance. That year, Medgar Evers was murdered in Mississippi, and a church bombing killed four girls in Birmingham. Then in October, Adlai Stevenson was mobbed by anti-UN demonstrators in Dallas and

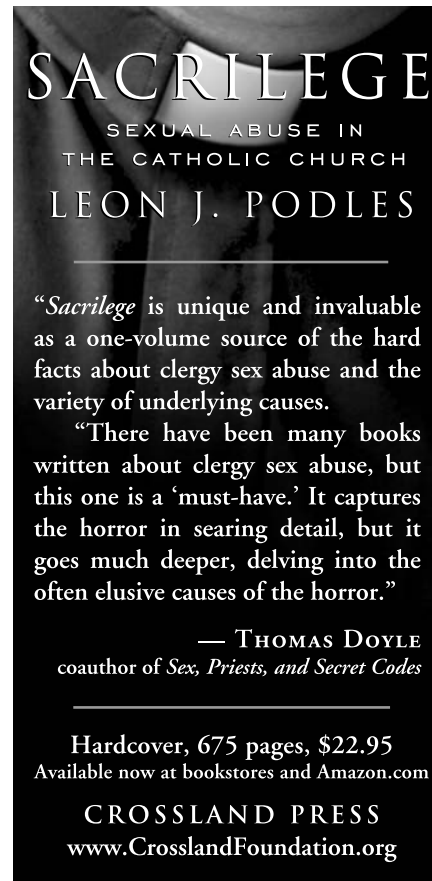
hit on the head with a placard. There was no link between the racial murders and the anti-UN demonstration, but in the collective mind of the liberal establishment, these events merged into a great stew of irrational "extremism." So it was understandable that they leapt to the conclusion that Kennedy had been killed by a radical-Right extremist.

But that conviction hardly changed once it became known that the assassin was a communist. To be sure, the newspapers dug into Oswald's career as a defector very thoroughly. But the editorials and opinion columns, their television equivalents, and the comments of liberal and cultural leaders repeatedly and passionately blamed the assassination on something called "extremism," which was disconnected from the actual assassin but linked to America in general and to the radical Right in particular. On the day after, James Reston—then the leading establishment columnist in America—stated this broader judgment very plainly: "The indictment extended beyond the assassin, for something in the nation itself, some strain of madness and violence, had destroyed the highest symbol of law and order ... from the beginning to the end of his administration, [Kennedy] was trying to damp down the violence of the extremists from the right." These themes were taken up by the *New York Times* and other newspapers in editorials and in public statements by figures as different as Sen. Mike Mansfield and Martin Luther King. It soon became the conventional wisdom that all Americans bore a share of the blame for the bigotry, intolerance, and hate that had struck down the president. John F. Kennedy in death became a martyr for the cause of civil rights—a cause to which in life he had shown a prudent political coolness.

This conclusion could never be stated clearly because it was directly contradicted by the facts of the assassination. If Kennedy was a martyr for civil rights, then Oswald must have been a racial bigot. But as Piereson points out, whatever else Oswald was, he was undoubtedly a strong supporter of

racial equality. Nor could Oswald be reasonably seen as acting out and thus symbolically revealing America's hidden bigotries. Being a communist and one-time Soviet defector, he was much too unrepresentative an American to serve in that way. Finally, no one in authority wanted to examine, let alone draw, the conclusion—for which there was ample evidence as Piereson shows—that Kennedy was a Cold War martyr, killed by a serious Marxist acting out of loyalty to the USSR and perhaps in response to a public appeal by Castro. Almost any conclusion was preferable to that. So an interpretation contrary to all the known facts was fervently embraced by the liberal establishment.

Piereson's second great contribution is to establish that Mrs. Kennedy herself, in the very depths of her grief, was significantly responsible for inventing and spreading this misinterpretation and lifting it to the level of myth. When she returned by air to Washington on the day



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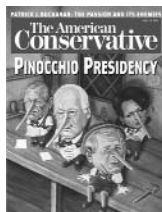
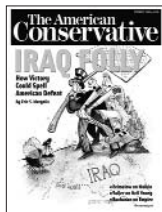
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of the assassination, she was asked to change out of her blood-spattered clothes before leaving the plane.

"No," she replied, "I want them to see what they have done." As Piereson asks: "Who, exactly, were 'they'? And what did 'they' do?"

Those questions were answered when Mrs. Kennedy learned that the lone Oswald had killed her husband. She then complained, "He didn't even have the satisfaction of being killed for civil rights. It had to be some silly little communist. It even robs his death of any meaning."

Even before the misinterpretation had become current, she had intuitively grasped both its main features and the unfortunate fact that reality did not quite measure up to them. In her arrangements for the funeral and her selection of those speaking at the various memorial services, she ensured that the misinterpretation would be the dominant theme. Finally, by dictating to Theodore White the story that Kennedy had often ended his day listening to songs from his favorite musical, "Camelot," and by insisting that it must remain in White's article over the skepticism of his editors at *Life* magazine, she lifted the misinterpretation to the level of myth: Camelot, an idealistic hero-king, achievement, betrayal, unworthy successors, a ruined people, nothing left save the memory of "one brief shining moment."

Was Jackie Kennedy really capable of such a brilliant coup—one that survives to this day? Was she not a mere woman of fashion, out of her depth in high politics, let alone in historical myth-making? To be sure, Piereson has to construct his case on the basis of relatively modest and scattered evidence. But the evidence he cites is powerful. And there are matters external to Piereson's book that support his thesis.

Twenty-two years ago, I was lucky enough to be present at a small dinner with Mrs. Kennedy, then Mrs. Onassis. At one point when we were discussing the dubious idea of resignation as a tactic of political advancement, I started to quote a British political maxim: "I forgot ..."

"Goschen," she said, completing my thought, "I forgot Goschen."

Perhaps I looked surprised at her knowing this obscure remark by Lord Randolph Churchill (who was explaining ruefully that his resignation as chancellor of the exchequer had not brought down the Salisbury government because the prime minister had simply appointed a little-known economist in his place). At any rate, she smiled in an amused way and said, "It was one of Jack's favorite remarks." For the remainder of a very pleasant dinner, she discussed high statecraft with an easy confidence suggesting either that she had received very good tutoring in it or needed none.

Women of fashion are very rarely airheads; successful women of fashion never. Long ago fashion ceased to be confined to clothes, hairstyles, and shoes and exerted its sway over art, music, literature, and politics.

Kennedy's arrival in the White House was a moment in which style itself became an important element in a politician's armory. No one had reflected on Eisenhower's provincialism; everyone remarked on the sophistication of Jack and Jackie.

But this superficial exaltation of style concealed a deeper influence that fashion was exerting on underlying political attitudes. Civil rights had been the province of deeply unfashionable people like Hubert Humphrey in the '50s; at some point in the '60s, owing in part to the heroism of the freedom riders, it became a glamorous cause. Likewise, anti-communism was losing its cachet over this period as McCarthyism drove smart liberals away, abandoning the cause to ordinary vulgar Americans.

Extended to the present, these trends have produced a cultural atmosphere in which the 20th-century political figures most admired by readers of *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair* would probably be Che Guevara and Martin Luther King. Observers attentive to purely political signs—votes, laws, opinion polls—were inevitably late to notice

this cultural shift. But a woman of fashion, who was also politically knowledgeable, was able to sense it from the surrounding atmosphere. Hence Jackie's initial regret that her husband had been killed by a "silly" admirer of Che Guevara rather than by a sinister enemy of Martin Luther King. Hence, too, her extraordinary ability to rescue him from this gauche plight by ensuring his transfiguration, if not his death, would be festooned with the right cultural symbols.

## THE RADICALIZATION OF AMERICAN LIBERALISM DROVE TRADITIONAL LIBERALS INTO NEOCONSERVATISM.

What liberals then achieved, with the brilliant assistance of Mrs. Kennedy, secured the passage of liberal legislation, the rout of Goldwater, and the temporary ostracism of "the radical Right." But the damage did not stop at that convenient point. A profoundly disorienting falsehood had been shoehorned into the national mind: that Kennedy had been killed by "something in the nation itself." One logical consequence of that belief was the desperate search to prove that Oswald, far from being a lone communist assassin, was in fact the cat's paw of powerful official and/or right-wing forces. Another was the coinage "Amerika," which implied a fascist reality under the constitutional disguise of the United States. A third was the conclusion that if Kennedy had been killed by Amerika, then the most powerful force in American political life, namely liberalism, must be complicit in this vast national crime—and in other national crimes, too.

Some people had already advanced a more restrained version of this argument before the assassination—namely, the cultural radicals of the Left. After Dallas, they returned to the fray with no holds barred.

As the Vietnam draft began to bite on college campuses, they found an army of young recruits to the antiwar movement and their wider cause of a radical

rebellion against liberal America and its proudest institutions, notably the universities and the Democratic Party, in pursuit of a culture of gratification without restraints (aka sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll.) To their surprise, however, as the radicals rushed forward with their battering rams, the liberals opened the gates and surrendered. How could they resist? If Amerika had killed Kennedy, then liberalism was merely a smiley face painted on a System of racist and sexist oppression. Liberals could best atone for their participation in

such a charade by supporting the revolution in all its exotic incoherence. For a decade or so after November 1963, liberalism and its institutions were convulsed by disputes, entering the maelstrom as pragmatic, patriotic, and problem-solving bodies and emerging from it as perfectionist, utopian, anti-American ones, secretly anxious to punish the American majority for its sins rather than solve its problems.

Ideas have consequences—and those consequences have consequences. The radicalization of American liberalism drove traditional liberals into neoconservatism. It forced blue-collar workers with patriotic and/or socially conservative views (i.e., the vast majority) into the arms of the GOP. It created an opportunity for the post-Goldwater "new conservatives" of Buckley and Reagan to move into the vast ideological territory abandoned by liberalism with its own philosophy of libertarian conservatism. And these various trends merged to shape a new political spectrum in which over the next two decades, conservatism would replace liberalism as the reigning public philosophy. Q.E.D.

Surely, however, Piereson's thesis, though persuasive, is open to one objection: namely, that the revolution of the Sixties happened in almost all advanced countries. Would it not have happened

in America exactly as it did even if Oswald had remained in Russia and Kennedy had lived?

Let us agree that some form of radical social convulsion would have taken place in America without Kennedy as a cause. But most social observers in early 1963, if told that a revolutionary mood would sweep the world in the coming decade and asked to predict its course in different countries, would have responded that the U.S. would likely experience the least serious upheavals, not the most. Left-wing movements in Europe had always had strong and openly revolutionary wings. Yet in the 1960s and '70s, these movements were tough in resisting their own radicals. It took a long march through the institutions (or, more prosaically, generational change) for the '60s radicals to come to power in France and Germany. America's lack of a socialist tradition, and its advantage in having a dominant liberal one, should together have ensured a smaller revolutionary threat and a stronger resistance. In the more dangerous conditions of the Depression, when FDR's liberalism was still establishing itself, it had contained the threat of revolutionary communism quite easily (in more senses than one).

No observer in 1963 would have forecast that the dominant American liberalism of that time would collapse and surrender to its own radicals almost without a fight. That it did so in reality testifies to an extraordinary loss of morale among liberals. That in turn is hard to explain except as a result of how they interpreted the Kennedy assassination as it was encapsulated above all in his wife's invention of the Camelot myth.

Successful women of fashion are never airheads, but as Che could have told Jackie, they can still be outwitted by the cunning of history. ■

*John O'Sullivan is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and author of The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister: Three Who Changed the World.*

[*Twilight at Monticello: The Final Years of Thomas Jefferson*, Alan Pell Crawford, Random House, 312 pages]

## Mr. Jefferson Comes Home

By Bill Kaufman

THE EDIFYING SIGHT of Ron Paul calmly explaining the contemporary application of American Revolutionary principles to the smirking disbelief of the plastic men and 9/11 junkies of the Republican field calls to mind the reaction of the reprobates who unexpectedly encounter Kurt Russell in John Carpenter's film "Escape from New York": "Snake Plissken—I thought you were dead!"

Paul has re-introduced the Founders into American political discussion, whence they had been banished long ago by New Dealers who dismissed the "horse and buggy Constitution" and, more recently, by the rootless airport-lounge-souled Republicans who regard the Bill of Rights as outmoded in our global wireless blah blah blah world.

The revolutionary fuse is lit. Quick, to the wick!

How wonderfully coincident that just as Paul is speaking the hauntingly resonant language of the early Republic, Alan Pell Crawford, Hoosier boy cum historian of his adopted Old Virginia, has published *Twilight at Monticello: The Final Years of Thomas Jefferson*, a superb and revealing study of Thomas Jefferson in retirement (if not ever repose) that makes Jefferson—the older, wiser, even more radical Jefferson—newly and provocatively relevant.

Crawford did his time on the Hill, working for Sen. James Buckley ("a genuine conservative") and none other than Congressman Ron Paul (for whom he will vote). In 1980, he anatomized the swindle known as the "New Right" in *Thunder on the Right*, which made him, for a time, something of a darling of the

liberal Left. He would later marry, raise a family, put down roots in Richmond—all those things the New Right claimed to support in those hysterical fundraising letters its bilkers-in-chief composed between cruises at the Brass Rail.

Crawford fell in love with Virginia, the Ancient Dominion, and in 2000 published *Unwise Passions*, an evocative study of the scandal-ridden Randolphs of Virginia.

*Twilight at Monticello* is Crawford's best book and a humanizing corrective to the recent tide of Jefferson damning. This is Jefferson in his late autumn, brooding on the parlous state of republicanism, delighting in the presence of his family, tormented by boils on his backside. His death is rendered with especial poignancy. (In his final months, Jefferson used opium to allay a painful urinary ailment. Imagine the DEA breaking down the doors to Monticello! The medical marijuanans could do no better than to enlist Jefferson.)

Crawford excels at capturing the rhythms of life at Monticello, punctuated as they were by discord and disease, by debts no honest man could pay,

prove Jefferson didn't do it," Crawford tells me of the conjugations with Sally Hemings, "just to be ornery—or at least to challenge what has become the conventional wisdom on the matter. I checked his health during the time of the pregnancies, for example, and he was fine. He suffered all sorts of ailments, but none when Sally got pregnant. The family alibis were unpersuasive, and then I realized that even if you believed them when they said it was Peter Carr, or Samuel Carr, or one of the Irish workmen, or Randolph Jefferson, you still had to conclude that all these men were having sexual relations with the slave women and that Jefferson's daughter and grandchildren were aware of it. That's how you had all those 'yellow' servants up there. The Hemingses weren't the only ones."

Jefferson never did reconcile his philosophical opposition to the "hideous evil" of slavery with the thing itself, despite entreaties by such Virginians as Edward Coles to act on his emancipatory convictions. Jefferson "simply could not imagine a realistic way to end" slavery and recommended instead

**JEFFERSON NEVER DID RECONCILE HIS PHILOSOPHICAL OPPOSITION TO THE "HIDEOUS EVIL" OF SLAVERY WITH THE THING ITSELF, DESPITE ENTREATIES BY SUCH VIRGINIANS AS EDWARD COLES TO ACT ON HIS EMANCIPATORY CONVICTIONS.**

by sottish in-laws and roistering Randolph relatives. He is affectionately amused by Jefferson's penchant for theoretical agrarianism, noting that in the year of the ex-president's elaborately planned "experimental" garden, Jefferson and his "family would rely to a remarkable extent on vegetables purchased from their own slaves, who grew them in far more modest garden plots alongside their cabins."

Crawford is no white-washer. For instance, he concedes that the preponderance of evidence suggests that Jefferson fathered children by Sally Hemings, and his depiction of life at Monticello is neither Arcadian nor naïve. "I set out to

a graceful and almost quietistic submission to regnant attitudes—"a position convenient for the slaveholder," as Crawford notes, but "less so for the slave." In the early 1840s, his grandson, Jeff Randolph, as governor of Virginia, proposed gradual emancipation and colonization (in Liberia) of Virginia's slaves, which, despite the inhumanity implicit in the displacement of African Americans who were by then rooted, inextricably, in American soil, was one of the last real efforts to end slavery before the peculiar institution perverted the Southern Democracy into expansionist (Annex Cuba!) pro-slavery apologists.

Crawford's Jefferson speaks to the current crisis in his late-life responses to the steady growth of the central state and the resultant erosion of the political role of the local citizen. Crawford emphasizes, as so few writers on Jefferson have done, the "ward republics," Jefferson's radical yet practical plan for decentralizing government. His "single most profound contribution to American political thought," in Crawford's phrase, was explicated in a series of letters in 1814-16. He proposed that almost all governmental powers devolve to "ward republics," five or six miles square, which the country could rely upon for "the eternal preservation of its Republican principles." Crawford abhors the enlistment of historical figures in present-day crusades, but Jefferson's ward-republic idea, though firmly set in a place and time, offers us a way out of Empire—a path of refreshment, a revitalizing end to our torpid condition.

These wards were not air-traced abstractions. The Virginian had been deeply impressed by the town-meeting government of New England, which he called "the wisest invention ever devised by the wit of man for the perfect exercise of self-government, and for its preservation." New England had stood fast against President Jefferson's ruinous embargoes, and his successor's War of 1812, such that Jefferson remarked, "I felt the foundations of the government shaken under my feet by the New England townships." Allowing for the inevitable local variations, he wished to see the form and spirit of those townships replicated elsewhere.

We are accustomed, at this late date of American decay, to reading that the Republic is moribund. Jefferson harbored such fears as early as 1815, when he wrote that citizens exercise political power "only on the days of their elections. After that it is the property of their rulers." As Crawford writes, "The steady transfer of power from the local governments to the states and from the states to the federal government threatened to turn all the challenges of self-government—of what later generations would

call democracy—into problems of administration."

The consequent enfeebling of the American aptitude for self-government would doom the Republic. "The virtues developed by participation in government would atrophy until Americans were no longer fit to govern themselves," explains Crawford. "Losing any attachment to their liberties, the citizens would lack the will to resist their usurpation by ambitious men."

Only by lodging the functions of government within the reach of ordinary people, by "giving to every citizen, personally, a part in the administration of public affairs," said Jefferson, could Americans ward off "the degeneracy of our government" into, well, look around today.

This "gradation of authorities," in Jefferson's phrase, parallels the Catholic concept of subsidiarity. The national government, strictly limited to constitutionally prescribed duties, would oversee relations between the states and with foreign governments. The states and counties would tend to the limited number of responsibilities best handled at those levels, but the majority of tasks—police, roads, justice, militia training, elections, care of the poor—would be absorbed by the ward-republics.

The wards—that is, the parents, not credentialed educrats, not Department of Education consultants—would be responsible for the establishment and operation of schools. Think home-schooling consortia; think the old district system in America before the catastrophic wave of consolidation and rule-by-experts deprived parents of any voice in the education factories. To put the state in charge of education, wrote Jefferson, would be as mad as giving it "the management of all our farms, our mills, and our merchants' stores." ("A policy," notes Crawford wryly, that "later generations of collectivists would endorse.")

"To describe Jefferson during this period as an advocate of 'states rights,' to borrow the language of a later period,

is to understate the case," argues Crawford. "What Jefferson proposed was a radical decentralization of government itself." States, hell—power to the neighborhoods!

The citizen of a ward-republic was to be no impotent voter, no cipher in the civil life of his community but rather "a participator in the government of affairs, not merely at an election one day in the year, but every day." Catch the echoes in the idealistic strain of the New Left: this was participatory democracy.

Crawford also makes much, and brilliantly, contrarily so, of Jefferson's draft "solemn Declaration and Protest of the Commonwealth of Virginia, on the Principles of the Constitution of the United States of America, and on the Violations of them," which he submitted to his friend and fellow ex-president James Madison on Christmas Eve 1825. This document, which Jefferson drew up for the Virginia General Assembly, denounced as "usurpations" the federal

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government's assumptions of powers not expressly granted by the Constitution. It denied that the general welfare clause created a government "without limitation of powers." (The Anti-Federalists had warned Madison that it did this very thing almost 40 years earlier, but little Jemmy dismissed them as alarmists. Madison, timorous till the end, dissuaded Jefferson from forwarding his 1825 "Declaration" to the Virginia General Assembly.)

The Constitution, wrote Jefferson in his protest on behalf of Virginia, was a "compact" of coequal states. By "enlarging its own powers by constructions, inferences and indefinite deductions," the federal government was shredding that compact. Jefferson did not threaten secession—not exactly. An "immediate rupture" of the union would be calamitous, but there was one calamity even greater: "submission to a government of unlimited powers."

This protest against the loose construction and internal improvements of the John Quincy Adams administration is usually shrugged off by historians as the "sour" work of a "crabbed and distrustful old man" who was "smothered by localism," as Leonard W. Levy characterized the elderly Jefferson. It is said to "reflect poorly on Jefferson," says Crawford, and is derogated as the sad evidence of its author's deterioration, of "a cramped, suspicious, and, above all, illiberal attachment to his native Virginia."

Yet Crawford insists that Jefferson in his dotage was defending the same principles of liberty and local self-governance as had the young Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence and in the 1798 Kentucky Resolutions, which he had ghosted while vice president. The Kentucky Resolutions, written in protest of the Alien and Sedition Acts, insisted, "whenever the General Government assumes undelegated powers, its acts are unauthorized, void, and of no force."

"Jefferson reiterated these principles throughout his life," writes Crawford, "and it is surely evidence of their

radicalism—and of Jefferson's timeless relevance—that they retain their power to offend even now."

Do you doubt it? Then witness the Paul maul. Speak for a decentralized, peaceful republic and the chickenhawks will peck.

"Real politics," Crawford tells me in an interview, "isn't possible at [the national] level or at this stage of history, at least through the official channels. We have crossed some line, and there is no going back. All that is left for the official channels to do is wage war, tax, manipulate, command allegiance, and energe themselves. All real politics is done elsewhere, and it is an illusion to expect otherwise."

"I can't stand to hear Democrats and Republicans argue anymore, because it is a phony argument," he continues. "They are merely competing for jobs. No good can come of it. Only the raw exercise of force and the subtler exercise of manipulation." He singles out as illustrative the "significant moment when the professionals of both parties went down to Florida [after Election Day 2000] and took over from the Democratic precinct workers and treated them (as did the media) with utter scorn."

"Power," Crawford says, "is bad for a man and for everybody else. Presidential power allowed Jefferson to go to the wall for a stupid theoretical abstraction"—the embargo that galvanized New England. Crawford conceives of his subject not only as Jefferson but "the American presidency"—and he writes not in the Schlesingerian school of power worship but as a sympathetic profiler of the Jefferson who heartily distrusted "the consolidation of authority in the executive branch of government" and the "visceral desire for power itself."

That Jefferson survives. We see flashes of his vision all around us today: in homeschooling and the small-schools movement; in community-supported agriculture, through which farmers sell to neighbors; in the rejuvenated music and literature of place. You hear its echoes in Ron Paul's hopeful

presidential campaign, in the peaceful hippie secessionists of the Second Vermont Republic, at farmers markets, and on small-scale organic farms. Home is being re-found, re-defended.

Not since the 1930s has the Jeffersonian vision seemed more congruent with the times. (Though that decade ended with the laying of the cornerstone of the Jefferson Memorial—the symbolic entombment of Jeffersonianism.)

By a happy happenstance, I read page proofs of *Twilight at Monticello* while preparing for a fine conference on the "Humane Vision of Wendell Berry," sponsored by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, the McConnell Center of the University of Louisville, and the Philadelphia Society. Berry—farmer, poet, novelist, essayist, Kentuckian—is no drawer-up of ten-point programs, but he does invoke Thomas Jefferson more than any other political figure, calling upon Jefferson's wisdom to maintain—or reclaim—"farming, education, and democratic liberty."

Berry's poem "The Mad Farmer Manifesto: The First Amendment" uses Jefferson's words as an epigraph: "it is not too soon to provide by every possible means that as few as possible will be without a little portion of land. The small landholders are the most precious part of a state." To which Berry responds:

That is the glimmering vein  
of our sanity, dividing from us  
from the start; land under us  
to steady us when we stood,  
free men in the great communion  
of the free. The vision keeps  
lighting in my mind, a window  
on the horizon in the dark.

That vision may have dimmed at times, flickering toward extinguishment, but it has taken on a new brightness of late. Jefferson lives! ■

*Bill Kauffman's books include Dispatches from the Muckdog Gazette and Look Homeward, America. His Ain't My America is due out from Holt/Metropolitan in April.*

# Get 'er Done

You need to know about how in 1962 I was a half-wild country kid of 16 in the wilds of King George Country, Virginia, and drove a derelict '53 Chevy that shouldn't

even have started but in fact went places that would terrify an armored corps. (You may think you don't need to know this. Well, you do. It's like, you know, real history and American.)

Now that Chevy was brown like two colors of mud. It had six cylinders, but ran on three, perhaps saving the others for emergencies. The closest it came to compression was a sort of ancestral memory, and the tires showed more fabric than rubber. But it was built like a tank. It had to be. Kids then were hard on cars.

The county was mostly woods and fields with towns far apart—King George, Colonial Beach, and Dahlgren Naval Weapons Laboratory on the Potomac, where I lived. Cars were our life. On Saturday nights, we drove interminably through the dark forests, just driving, moving, rapt with the night and freedom, without the sense God gave a crabapple. The times were different. We'd park for hours with our girlfriends in empty fields glowing with moonlight. We actually liked our girlfriends because we knew we probably weren't going to get laid anyway, so we might as well not do it with someone who was good company. It didn't seem to hurt us.

We learned things only known to teenagers. Don't park under a mercury light because it makes zits turn purple and green.

Truth is, the Pluke Bucket—my tired Detroit dragon—was not of high consequence. The best cars had phone-flow. This refers to a gear shift of four speeds,

located on the transmission hump. ("Four on the floor" to the uninitiated.) Below in the scale came threenatry—three on the tree—meaning a shifter of three speeds on the steering column. The Pluke Bucket had an automatic transmission, which was as prestigious as a venereal disease in a convent. But she was mine.

Our dream car was a fitty-sedden Chev 283, bored-and-stroked, with dual four-barrel carbs, magneto ignition, solid lifters, Isky three-quarter cam, milled heads, Hearst narrow-gate phone-flow, 3.51 Positraction and tuck-and-roll Naugahyde. But this was like saying that Ursula Andress was a hot date. Wasn't going to happen. Not to us.

Lots of times we got into sort of half-trouble, which is about right for teenagers. Harry Burrell was a farmer noted for being irascible. He would come out with a shotgun after anyone who drove along the dirt road that crossed his fields. I remember that he held his pants up with a piece of rope. He was that stingy.

Anyway, one dark night after the spring rains, my girlfriend Rosie and I wanted adventure and roared in the Pluke Bucket along his road, blowing the horn. If Harry had shot us, we probably would have deserved it, but that was true of most things that the boys did.

Sure enough, the lights came on in Harry's place, and he came after us on his tractor—so help me—just about the time we came to serious mud and our

tired chariot began spinning out and fishtailing back and forth toward the ditches.

We began to be scared. Harry wouldn't really shoot us (we thought), but we might wish he had. He was rough. But the Bucket and I had been in worse places, and I could surf in mud. In deeper places, the trick was to speed up, bump, whrrrr, and spin through without quite breaking the axle.

But Harry had a tractor. We hadn't thought of that.

We came to where the road, which is an optimistic designation, dropped down the side of a hill to a narrow creek and then went back up. The tractor was gaining. Not good. We shot down the declivity, crossed the creek on momentum, and then ... stopped, tires spinning helplessly. Things were deteriorating.

Americans are capable people, though without judgement. I leaped out to push, and Rosie took the wheel. Picture it: cold mud over my shoes, raw exhaust blowing hot over me, tires spraying mud, and tractor lights appearing at the crest of the hill. Darkness. Wetness. Our bodies would never be found. I made a superhuman effort, seeing no plausible alternative. The Bucket moved a little, and a little more.

Rosie was a country girl and understood mud. She knew that if she stopped to pick me up, the Bucket wouldn't go forward again but spin out. She slowed, I ran. I leaped in the door, and we went up hill—not very fast but faster than a tractor.

That's why Americans got to the Moon and occasionally win wars. I mean, can you imagine a Frenchman in a Lamborghini escaping Harry Burrell? Nah. ■



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